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Islamophobia: Formed or Created?- Areeb Ahsan¹

“Religions are perfect, not the people. Blame them, rather than creating hatred for the religion”

ABSTRACT

The research paper draws attention to the worldwide hot burning topic known as *Islamophobia*. The continuous fear and new definitions in the mind of people are causing such terror to augment and exaggerate. The paper highlights the main intricacies involved in spreading such hatred around the globe. How the media, government officials, and previous acts have caused such terror to rise at the boiling point. Distinctions have been laid to what is basically mentioned in the Holy book Quran and as per the sayings of Prophet Muhammad or the *Sunnah* against what mainly the people interpret and make up their minds against such religion.

The paper talks about how history caused the topic to emerge in today's era. Various terrorist attacks by terrorist groups whether of a particular religion or not have used the word Jihad to maintain fear and hatred. The panel also deals with India, a basic hub for *Islamophobia*. India has been a secular country has always faced difficulties and hatred among religions. Nevertheless, how harsh the fear is, the people with a concrete mindset of understanding it has grown to be together with each other and have defeated the culture of creating *Islamophobia*.

The conclusive panel lays complete stress on how the Islamic religion is not about spreading hatred rather widening the scope of peace and living in it together with harmony. Innocent lives are of no harm and should be caused no harm, the religious places of whatever religion it is, should not be damaged. And In the end, the inner self should be made better that's what true Jihad is.

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KEYWORDS: Islamophobia, Jihad, Terrorism, Peace, Inner fight.

1. INTRODUCTION:

A fear or an extreme terror over a particular object, person, or a community caused by various precedents involving fright of the same resembles a phobia. In today's era, the loathing on the Islamic community or the Muslims particularly is piling the minds and headlines of the generation. An exaggerated fear, hatred, and hostility toward Muslims and Islam that is perpetuated by negative stereotypes resulting in bias ness, discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion of Muslims from social, political, and civic life are basically what Islamophobia is.²

As per the writings in the *Holy book Quran* regarding such phobia is "You shall certainly be tried in your possessions and your lives, and you shall certainly hear many hurtful things from some of those who were given the Book before you and from some of Polytheist. But, if you persevere patiently and guard yourself against evil, then that is the matter of strong determination".³ Because of the various criterion of judgment through the 9/11 attack or the Afghan – Iraq wars, this concept has now become more of a political agenda rather than a fear of thought for the living humanity. A fear towards the community by few is now hyping every other's mind because of the illegitimate discrimination and biases globally as a whole. On the contrary, there are various other saintly communities or the religious groups that are working together to fight such terror and bring out the stone of peace and togetherness among other communities. Generalizing the concept of Islamophobia, the coined was first initiated by the Runnymede Trust and debates in Britain; from here, it entered other national contexts and debates, both re-shaping and being shaped by its deployment in particular configurations of power and was adopted by international monitoring bodies. This particular patch of fear has hands differently when the nation as a singular term is dealt with. The US mainly in a deep urge of fear concreted the concept of Islamophobia way different than what the Asian States bothers and comparison to the Arabic Nations which has roots twisted the real meaning of it. Muslim women are often the targets of this type of Islamophobia. Several European nations have passed legislation curtailing expressions of 'Muslimness' and Islam through laws that prohibit face and head veils. In some instances, the laws are framed in general terms, banning clothing that

² Wajahat Ali, Eli Clifton, Matthew Duss, Lee Fang, Scott Keyes, and Faiz Shakir, "Fear, Inc.: The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America" (Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress, 2011)

³ Qur'an 3, 186

covers one's face for security reasons, while in other instances there is no pretense of neutrality and the law specifically targets Islamic face coverings.

Islamophobia in India has taken a different shape than usual concerning the globe. Religious-based discrimination has enlarged its sphere across all the corners of Independent India. In this developing country, the topic of Islamophobia is not just burning rather the riots between the communities or the terror of the other religion by a specific community on the face of it is causing Nation-wide problem. These attacks are referred to as communal riots in India and are seen to be part of a pattern of sporadic sectarian violence between the majority Hindu and minority Muslim communities, and have also been connected to a rise in Islamophobia throughout the 20th century.⁴

The phobic minds of the people are mainly governed by the wrongful interpretation of Jihad and the acts of the illiterate "so-called Jihadis". The real meaning of Jihad is not the war against others but rather the self-struggle or the personal struggle that is deeply related to Islam that involves the matter of the disciplined spirit or the sense of principle or belief that is laid down in the *Holy book Quran* and as per to what the *Hadith* says. But, unfortunately, the terrorism community of the world has now marked its only motto or the proviso for doing or pertaining such acts of destruction. The word jihad appears frequently in the Quran with and without military connotations, often in the idiomatic expression "striving in the path of God (al-jihad fi sabil Allah)". And as per what *Hadith* says is finding truthfulness in oneself and walking on the path of so pebbled by God and not by raging wars or splitting drops of blood. Contrary to what extremists and anti-Muslim personalities claim, the word "jihad" does not mean "to wage holy war," or "to kill the infidel," or "to commit terrorism." The word "jihad" means "to struggle." The prophet Muhammad said the best jihad was to speak words of truth "in front of a tyrannical leader". Not violence. Not terrorism. Indeed, the only two groups who claim "jihad is equal or in proportion to Terrorism" are Islamic State terrorists and Islamophobes with an agenda. Both are ignorant of Islam and serve only one another. On the other plate of the table, Muslims believe that the guidance in the Quran is for all time and all people. *The Holy book Quran* emphasizes the oneness of human beings. It introduces the idea of common human origin and ancestry at four different places and says that humans have their origin in a single cell or soul. Even the purpose of Jihad that we say today also includes the basis of

⁴ Herman, Phyllis K. (2006). Kathryn M. Coughlin (ed.). *Muslim Cultures Today: A Reference Guide*

equality among all the individuals and with all the religious communities. This can be attended through the self-control and truthfulness of the soul and then only the purpose of oneness can be fulfilled not by blood and flesh.

2. THE HISTORY BEHIND IT:

If today we browse the term Islamophobia then the most active internet search engine, Google would showcase more than 1500 results broadcasting the cases, different meanings, and what every nation feels about it also most importantly would highlight the pros and cons, the fear and danger of it. But it is important to dig out the main story behind such phobia and how well it was started, and what were the presumptions regarding it. Culture in anthropological thought is based in colonial hierarchies that defined it in terms of civilization and the imputed categories of superiority and inferiority. Before any such incident of the resulted terror, a French painter commonly known as Alphonse Etienne Dinet in a biography of the *Prophet Muhammad* which he wrote at around 1918 carved islamophobe in the French language. People at that particular time were not familiarized with such terms and were not so dealing with it. But Britain originated Sociologist, Christopher Allen once quoted that these use of the term in such early ages, did not have the same meaning as in contemporary usage, as they described a fear of Islam by liberal Muslims and Muslim feminists, rather than fear or dislike/hatred of Muslims by non-Muslims.⁵ The first recorded use of the word with a vast meaning in English was in 1923 in one of the journals of the Theological Studies.

In 1997, a report published by the Runnymede Trust inducted the word and gradually the term gathered a general usage, and from that time only the common people started recognizing it as a fear. The report that was published in November 1997 by the Home Secretary of the Commission on British Muslim and Islamophobia, Jack Straw. In the same report, Islamophobia was defined as "an outlook or worldview involving an unfounded dread and dislike of Muslims, which results in the world-wide practices of exclusion, outbreak, and discrimination."⁶ This caused a global spread of violation of Human Rights, marking the infringement of the main 30 Articles issued under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The introduction of the term was justified by the report's assessment that "anti-Muslim prejudice has grown so considerably and so rapidly in recent years that a new item in the vocabulary is needed".

⁵ "Islamophobia and its Consequences", European Islam: Pg. 144–67.

⁶ Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All

In 2006, A German scholar, Johannes Kandel wrote about Islamophobia being a vague term which encompasses every conceivable actual and imagined act of hostility against Muslims"⁷, and proceeds to argue that provisions or the criteria put forward by the Runnymede Trust are invalid and the Trust is viewing Islam at the darkest side rather than having a look of it as a whole.

In recent years, Islamophobia has evolved from a primarily political concept towards one increasingly deployed for analytical purposes. Researchers have begun using the term to identify the history, presence, dimensions, intensity, causes, and consequences of anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim sentiments. The Indian history of such a phobic movement started from the time of independence when India and Pakistan were made to divert from each other, resulting in violent movement and anger of religion between the two Nations. There are two-way theories regarding this. Few scholars as per their research and coverage comments about this violence or the act of such hatred of Anti-Muslims and the resulted violence describes it as the act of political interference or the so-called genocide rather than mentioning it as riots. Others argue that, although their community faces discrimination and violence, some Muslims have been highly successful, that the violence is not as widespread as it appears but is restricted to certain urban areas because of local socio-political conditions, and there are many cities where Muslims and Hindus live peacefully together with almost no incidences of sectarian violence. The very first major and disastrous movement in the history of India was the riot of Kolkata in 1964. This act was started or initiated by the then East Pakistan or now Bangladesh against the Hindus and the refugees were made to run away. The clashes, ransacking of shops, and looting and burning down of houses continued for three to four more days, and, according to official figures, a hundred houses and shops were ransacked, and completely or partially damaged or gutted. Along with that, there were various series of events that happened in India which is extremely disgusting for a democratic and socialist Nation.

In 2004, the fire of hatred was increasing among all. These cover the entire gamut: from verbal abuse, physical attack, negative stereotyping by the media and in the speeches of politicians, and alleged or only perceived humiliations, insults, and discrimination at the workplace to disadvantage in terms of receiving protection against insulting and denigrating pronouncements against Islam in the public domain. ⁸

3. INDIAN ISLAMOPHOBE:

⁷ "Islamophobia – On the Career of a Controversial Term"

⁸ 2004 study of the commission British Muslims and Islamophobia

After approx 200 years of being captured in the trap by the English rulers, the sense of independence was the feeling of happiness and heart full of tears; nevertheless, these British people left but created the rule of divide and the policy of hatred among oneself. They divided the land of secularism into India and Pakistan, even into small fragments of unnamed and unknown communities augmenting the idea of communalism. From the time onwards, the phobic mindset between the two Nations turned out to be the terror of religion than fear of region. Media and its trending headlines had and are still playing in the front foot to hype the culture of hatred and the religious nightmare. At one colony there are screams of the throat all over the roads, highlighting the distress among Hindus and stating not a fine culture of Muslims. Bloods can be seen all over the sewer that used to have drained of household garbage but now it contains the irony of secularism and the meaning of hatred in the form of blood and flesh. Though at another colony of some nowhere land in the world's largest democratic nation, the roads are captured by young Indians of different idols holding the flag together, and yes, that sewer just contains the fakeness of media and the politics of the nation making the road of togetherness a clean place of oneness and brotherhood.

Indian Community started its phobic culture with the beginning of riots, most importantly to mention the “war” between two religion of the same land for a belief or sideline story as suppressive as the idea, but just like the drop of oil to the fire in the hearts of the people. It has been seriously noted and through various series of research it has been seen that the Indian people are the dolls that are being played by the political parties in the name of betterment. One of the great sociologists and anthropologist Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah in several of his write-ups has concluded that certain riots or violence such as the outburst in the city of Bhagalpur, Bihar in 1989 which led to the death of numerous rather the number remains un-figured of the humanity. Also, the violence in Hashimpura and Moradabad in the year 1987 and 1980 respectively were highlighted as the organized killing mainly for the political purpose or for the standards of certain leaders. The violence has become a substitute for class tensions. Nationalists, rather than dealing with the claims from the lower class, instead view Muslims and Christians as not "fully Indian" due to their religion and portray those who carry out these attacks as "heroes" that defended the majority from "anti-national". Muslims and certain other minority scaled religions are viewed as suspect and their loyalty to the state is questioned because of the ill-will still prevalent after the violence during partition.

India has become an epicenter of Islamophobia in Asia, with reports of oppression committed against the large Muslim population pouring every day.⁹ Even in the darkest year of the globe, where every other person is locked inside the four-cornered walls because of the outbreak of Corona Virus, numerous right-wing extremists in India are accusing the Indian Muslims and blaming them for the spread of the pandemic in the largest democratic nation. Hashtags have been flooded all over the internet and social media as "Corona Jihad" because of few people who were involved in the Tablighi Jamaat and got infected with the virus. Numerous shops, pharmacies, hospitals, etc. started boycotting Muslims which led to the new dimension of Islamophobia. WHO in this situation concerning Tablighi Jamaat responded on the Indian Islamophobe, "It is important not to profile the cases based on racial, religious and ethnic lines".¹⁰ The intellectuals believe that a pandemic or a virus doesn't see or affect a particular race, religion, caste, or any distinct group of people, it's just the mindset of few people who are highlighting this issue as a religious-based problem?

In one of the recent reports, a list of manufactured prejudice was created which highlighted the main reasons for producing hatred among Muslims.¹¹ The majority are with the mindsets that the Muslim community spread hatred and is inherently violent because of the term Jihad, but they are not well versed with the real meaning and implications of Jihad which is written down in the Quran. Raising anti-Islamic rhetoric, hate crimes, violations of rights of Muslims, and blaming them for the spread of the pandemic and of late now the police action against students and activists who had participated in the demonstrations against the controversial citizenship law has raised serious questions on the democratic credentials of the country.¹²

Reactions are sometimes dangerous, but no reactions are more disastrous when violence is questioned. The Indian Islamic community or the Muslim groups, who are the minorities in the democratic nation of the world, are facing huge augmentation of fear and insecurity; the feelings of suppression are mounting within the Islamic people. The highly debated Citizenship Amendment Act has just reduced the definition of 'India'. India was about the people of India but this Act – and for that matter, even the downgrading of J&K's status to that of a Union Territory, and the five-month-long shutdown in the Valley – has confined the definition of India to its geographic boundaries. The worst among these things is a systematic attempt to muzzle the voice of dissent. If

⁹ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/india-islamophobia-puts-democracy-under-stress-/1842329>

¹⁰ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/01/coronajihad-only-latest-manifestation-islamophobia-india-has-been-years-making>

¹¹ <http://www.tdnworld.com/editorial/is-islamophobia-a-new-phenomenon-in-independent-india/>

¹² Islamophobia puts democracy under stress – Anti-terrorism law

anyone is in disagreement with the majoritarian view, they are not only termed as 'anti-national', but a sharp comparison is also drawn between them and Pakistan.¹³ Independent Human Rights Commission on the 19th day of April 2020 urged the Government of India and the nation to take necessary and urgent steps for avoiding and vanishing the feeling of islamophobia. Along with it, the rights of every individual are demanded and should be maintained as per the norms of International Human Rights law.

4. JIHAD:

Am I taking about terrorism? Are my intentions to spread hatred? We all feel that Jihad is equal to violence, don't we? Perhaps, we are in the wrong direction of interpretation. The real meaning of Jihad has been interpreted by different scholars, people, and by many uniform codes in different ways, but as per the *Sunnah* and the writings in the Quran, Jihad is none other than self-improvement.¹⁴ The struggle for self-reform, education, and protection of universal religious freedom is the true sense of Jihad. The knowledge of Jihad has been diverted because of two main factors i.e., Few Islamic Communities and Islamophobia.

Various Islamic Communities feel that to get complete salvation performance of jihad is necessary. The Jihad that they think like is protecting the religion by waging war or killings is completely vague. Jihad at any point doesn't stress on killing innocents. Islamophobes because of tampered definitions and use of the word for wars and killings have made it worst for people to understand. Where any devastation occurs and any Islamic person is found behind it or even a slight bit of occurrence is seen, the whole scenario becomes a Jihadist act. Nevertheless, various scholars and media have proven that just because of the name of Islam, people tend to add the so-called Jihad to the act they do without knowing the actual essence of it. In India, it has been seen that such types of wrongful acts tend to be a misrepresentation of the word.

The Holy book Quran specifically commands Muslims to engage in the lesser jihad to protect the religious places such as "Church, Temples, Synagogues and Mosques" from any war or attack.¹⁵ Various religious communities and people who believe that wrongful acts were done in the name of God are way wrong than anything and they do support all those religions who are bound in the thread of the "Wrongful-Jihad" meaning.

¹³ <https://www.thequint.com/voices/blogs/indian-muslims-fear-suppression-modi-shah-govt-citizenship-amendment-act-nrc>

¹⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2017/07/08/jihad-is-not-a-dirty-word/>

¹⁵ Quran 22:41

The sayings of Prophet Muhammad were highlighted in various Hanafi school of teaching, regarding no war should damage an innocent, damage should not be caused to any property, livestock or greenery or harm to any place of worship. Jihad has been categorized into three types namely- Jihad against you, Jihad against Satan, and Jihad against an open enemy, but no jihad pronounces war against innocents or without any cause to those who cannot harm.

Few terrorists, who used the word "Jihad" during their reign of terrorism, have made the whole world to suffer from the same name. Even people who never heard such words now fear it. Those, who have just landed in the place of creating terror, have made Jihad their favorite word without knowing the meaning and implications of it. They have made Jihad a part of terrorism and because of that only; the world is not able to get the perfect meaning and knowledge of it.

In this era of hatred, we can perfectly say that it is not Jihad against Community rather, it is Jihad vs. Terrorism. The very new trend that India is facing after Corona Jihad is the "Love Jihad". People have been misrepresenting others irrespective of the religions in terms of marriage. Though, the Ministry of State has cleared the opaque culture of blaming religions for any cause. Freedom to profess, practice, and propagate religion subject to public order, morality, and health.¹⁶ Jihad should not be against others but against one inner Satan, and then only one can get in the path of fruitfulness. No religion should be boycotted because of any precedents that occurred once upon a time as this can violate the fundamental right of the citizen.¹⁷ The whole point lays down stress on no religion can be blamed for the act of fraudulent marriage or to practice any religion. The study of Jihad should not be interpreted literally but should be adjusted as per the accordance with new historical and international conditions and conducted by peaceful means, rather than by the sword.

5. CONCLUSION:

Understanding Islamophobia without knowing the true meaning of it has been a paradox now. We believe that religions create hatred when it is done against the norms and guidelines of other religions. The hatred has been since the history of the secular world but has been in the light from the previous 15-20 years due to the immense

¹⁶ Article 25 of the Indian Constitution

¹⁷ Article 15(2) of the Indian Constitution

rise of terrorism among the globe. Each country irrespective of what their beliefs are, spiraled into the circle of the tampered definition of the words such as Jihad, salvation, etc. and so they relate these to terrorism.

No law particularly states about religions being the mastermind behind the terrorism. Even law prohibits questioning a religion based on misrepresentation caused by few people. The media have been the most eminent partner in rising the fear and terror against a community and a religion. People particularly are not per se aware of what truly is happening and what significance it means but they are guided by what is shown around the globe by the media.

Media alone cannot be blamed; precedents have been also a huge factor. The 9/11 attack, Osama Bin laden's terrorist group, Iraq wars, Indo-Pak wars, and many more attacks and wars have been in the list that misrepresented the term Jihad and caused the fear of Islam to grow. The fundamental point that should be noted is people are nowadays trying to understand the real cause of such phobia and what were the pitfalls that the world was not aware of when they blacklisted the particular religion. In this world full of several religions, people are taking a stand for exaggerated fear and wrongful blaming on other religions. Religions have their preaching, norms, and guidelines that should be followed by the people. Though not a single religion portrays hatred or guides people to kill innocents. People have wrongfully interpreted various sayings and words that should be rectified not by a particular religion but when the whole world understands the true essence of togetherness, then only such exaggerated fear would vanish.