

Why do some people have extremist thoughts?



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The major political assassinations in the post-Independent India were those of Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and Rajeev Gandhi. Yet the assassins were not hated on the basis of their own religious or communal affinities.

India opposed only the ideology of Nathuram Godse who murdered Mahatma Gandhi, not the community he belonged to. The violence let loose on Sikhs in the wake of the Indira Gandhi assassination and the north Indians' hatred towards Tamils following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi did not last long.

After Independence, no organisation except the Muslim League was bothered about the Muslims' demands, growth and social development. In fact, the Muslims constituted the major Congress vote-bank. But the Congress, which was in power at the Centre, had failed to stop the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992. That

was the starting point of changes that took place among the Muslims. The Muslim League was accused by the Muslims of having failed to make the Babri Masjid demolition a national issue and of having not reacted sufficiently to the event. As a result of the Muslim's loss of faith in the Muslim League, several Muslim organizations sprouted across the country, particularly in Tamil Nadu. Till that time, the Muslims' stock in the society had been high.

Mumbai and Coimbatore

Several untoward incidents had started taking place in India including the Mumbai bomb blasts. They echoed in Tamil Nadu too. In Coimbatore, constable Selvaraj was murdered in a private dispute and the incident triggered the 1997 December riots in which over 19 Muslims were killed. One of the Muslim outfits which took to the street seeking justice was involved in the back-to-back bomb blasts on February 14, 1998. Though nearly 25 years have passed, the wounds of the major blasts are yet to fully heal. Consequently, the economy of the Muslims living in Coimbatore, suffered a great setback and the community was brought under the police scanner. As it turned out, even the innocent Muslims were also imprisoned.

On October 23 last, a car blast happened, threatening the peace of Coimbatore. Some Muslim youths were arrested, who were, in fact, not connected with the Jamaat of their region. The jamaat did not come forward even to bury the body of Jamesha Mubeen killed in the car blast. It was only after the police persuasion that the Jamaat allowed space for burial. Only the number of people required for the last rites took part in the ceremony.

The truth is that the Muslim society, as a whole, hates such self-styled champions of Muslim welfare who are engaged in terrorism. The social media platforms pose a great challenge to the Muslims. The so-called revolutionary ideas floated in social media by the young Muslims turn against the community. Yet the

number of the Muslim youth using the social media has, of late, been, increasing.

The youth going astray

Some Muslim youth, who are unhappy with the democratic organizations, go about searching for international terrorist groups. Muslim leaders and jamaats doubt if the Muslim youth are engaged in wrong-doings, instigated online by some terrorist groups far away and misguided by their evil ideologies. The government scrutiny too is notably headed towards this direction. "Such terrorist and anti-people groups must be brought to justice, the Coimbatore Muslims' Confederation has categorically said.

The administration of mosques must pay attention to activities such as planning a long-term vision of Muslim youth's education, creation of job opportunities for the educated, training the youth to take the competitive exams and involving them in sports and games. The Muslim orators must propagate the principle of fraternity with the fellow Indians among the Muslims in the country, stemming the rot of negative anti-Indian politics.

Is it just?

The trend of hate against a community is quite unfortunate in a country reputed for unity in diversity of cultures and religions and religious harmony. In order to reverse this trend, all secular forces must formulate political strategies. But unfortunately it is the secular forces which thrust this responsibility on the Muslims.

The government must be neutral, not taking sides with any religious organization. The opposition too must act on the ideology that gives equal importance to all religions. No political party or movement should engage in activities detrimental to any religion or any religious faith. Taking a stance favourable to a community or against a community will prove inimical to peace and growth of India.

Muslims account for 170 crores of the world population. The highest number of Muslims (20 crore) lives in India, next only to Indonesia. The Muslim population in Tamil Nadu is just 50 lakh. Of this, only less than 200 persons are monitored as having extremist tendencies. This is the global trend.

Political parties should not fish in the troubled waters, trying to gain political mileage out of incidents such as the Coimbatore car blast and dividing the people on the religious lines by way of implementing vote-bank strategies. When it comes to terrorism, a minority-oriented or a majority-oriented approach is not necessary. Steps must be taken against all initiatives illegal in themselves and of themselves and criminals booked; no communal or religious labeling!

While all communities are enjoying the fruits of peace and progress, why should Muslims alone suffer from a sense of guilt, implicated in political deceits and guiles? The civil society must ponder over it.

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