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by Moin ul Haque
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Already 10 months of confinement in Jammu and Kashmir.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

In the 1920s, the British shaped Islam and Hinduism in their image. They created the Muslim Brotherhood around Hassan el-Banna in Egypt and the SSR around V. D. Savarkar in India. These two political doctrines instrumentalized religions and preached intolerance. When they decolonized the Indian subcontinent, the British made sure that they remained indispensable by dividing it in an unmanageable way. Today, Kashmir is artificially divided between Pakistan and India, both of which claim it in its entirety. Continuing Savarkar's work, Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided to apply the concept

of Hinduism (Hindutva) and to transform the lives of Muslims into a hell. Ambassador Moin ul-Haque explained this tactic.

The entire world is in the grip of Coronavirus. Lockdowns, curfews, social distancing are being employed to contain the pandemic. The normal way of life of billions of people is impacted. Educational institutions and businesses are closed, hospitals for normal patients are inaccessible, international travel is suspended, and people are being forced to stay indoors.

Governments around the world are facing critique from their public for these strict measures. In western democracies, questions of fundamental freedoms and human rights have been raised. Even in these extraordinary times, the essential precautionary measures to contain the pandemic could not escape general criticism.

The deserted streets and shopping centres around the world have an eerie resemblance to a recent similar situation in a region existing on this same planet. Eight million people of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJ&K) had to suffer the ignominy of comparable restrictions not because of a biological genome, but from a virus of hate, prejudice and intolerance, systematically manufactured in the laboratory of RSS- the ideological water head of the Indian ruling party BJP.

IOJ&K is under curfew and lock down for more than ten months. This is being enforced brutally by nearly 900,000 Indian military, making the region the most militarized zone in the world. Virtually the people are caged within their homes with one soldier standing in front of a house transforming the place to a gigantic prison. Children cannot go to school, sick to hospitals, nor dead can receive proper burial. These draconian restrictions are not to contain a viral pandemic, but to suppress the will of people who simply want the protection of their fundamental rights and fulfilment of promises made to them by Indian leaders for safeguarding their land and identity.

This Virus of Hate being spread in India through a carefully crafted plan targeting minorities especially 200 million Indian Muslims has slowly but surely led to the death of humanity in a country which once took pride in its diversity and secular traditions.

Not anymore.

The country had started its slide towards religious intolerance and communal violence immediately after BJP came into power in 2014. Public lynching of innocent Muslim citizens by RSS goons and supporters became a norm. Sadly, the BJP leadership

encouraged this crowd vigilantism by themselves preaching hate and violence against Muslims. Yogi Adityanath, the controversial Hindu monk, who is the Chief Minister of Indian largest state Uttar Pradesh (UP), had time and again given statements targeting Muslims. Referring to peaceful rally of women against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), he declared that these women should be fed with 'bullets than buryani'. In one of his public gathering, one of his supporters went to the extreme of exhorting to dig out the bodies of dead Muslim women from their graves and rape them.

BJP and RSS' Hindutva agenda is no more a secret. This hateful and exclusionary plan draws inspiration from Hitler's Nazism and Mussolini's Fascism. For them, India is only for Hindus, and the remaining Indian Muslims, Christians and Sikhs are second class citizens who must embrace Hindu culture and values in order to earn the right to live in India. According to the celebrated Indian writer Arundhati Roy, RSS compares the Muslims of India to the Jews of Germany believing that Muslims have no place in Hindu India. She noted that BJP leaders in their speeches repeatedly cast Muslims as 'treacherous permanent outsiders', whose only place is either 'graveyard or Pakistan'. The French scholar Christophe Jafferlot notes that 'Hindu nationalists see themselves as the true sons of soil, whereas they view Muslims and Christians as products of bloody foreign invasions'.

After BJP won election in 2014, 'saffronization' of Indian history and cultural practices started with a renewed vigour. Under this project, history textbooks in educational institutions were rewritten to further Hindu supremacist agenda idolizing Hindu icons and effacing references to Muslims contributions during their long rule of India. Roads named after Mughal kings have been renamed, while Muslim rulers have been demonized with accusations of sanctioning 'holocaust' on Hindus. Even the iconic Taj Mahal was not spared when UP government excluded it from its Tourism Booklet issued in 2017. UP's Chief Minister's Adityanath aversion to this Mughal monument was well known, with his assertion that it was not part of India's culture and he even claimed it to be a Hindu temple.

BJP's first term in government was while more ostensibly focussed on its economic agenda and forging international partnerships, but under the close watch of Prime Minister Modi and his cohorts, the grounds were also prepared in a sustained manner for party's Hindu-First agenda and 'remaking of India into an authoritarian, Hindu nationalist state'. To achieve this, BJP systematically gained control of key government institutions.

Samanth Subramanian writing in the *Guardian* last year termed it as the most serious crisis of India's 72 years of existence. He noted that India's 'courts, much of its media, its investigative agencies, its election commission – have been pressured to fall in line with Modi's policies'. The nexus between ultra-nationalist Indian media and BJP, in particular, has reached to dangerous proportions. Many amongst Indian intelligentsia and civil society have characterized the nationalist media as a 'mouthpiece of Modi government'.

It is also being feared that Hindutva ideology would ultimately lead to the undoing of Indian constitution. Subramanian in his *Guardian* piece wrote that 'constitutional niceties' weren't compatible with 'BJP's blueprint for a country in which people are graded and assessed according to their faith'. It was therefore no surprise when BJP leaders repeatedly attacked secular makeup of Indian polity. Pragya Thakur, a BJP politician from Bhopal even called Nathuram Godse, the assassin of Gandhi, as a 'patriot'.



Seeking to push back the independence of the Indian subcontinent, which they knew was inevitable, the British promoted Mahatma Gandhi and eliminated the nationalists. But Gandhi advocated the maintenance of castes and was opposed to a secular India forcing Muslims to secede. The proclamation of Pakistan is the occasion of a gigantic massacre. Horrified, the mahatma tries to calm the situation he has provoked, when Savarkar's private secretary, Nathuram Godse, who blames him for the partition of the country, assassinates him.

Thus, the decades old RSS' scheme for creating a Hindu nation was being achieved in a methodical manner by infecting the minds of majority with a virus of hate and through constant vilification of the minority communities. As Subramanian asserted that RSS and

BJP's success owed to 'adept poisoning of public discourse' and 'indoctrination of media outlets', while 'squadrons of social media trolls lie, polarise and demonize all day long'. Majority of Indian Hindus played along wilfully. Others had no choice but to keep silent as anyone with a dissenting voice would be dubbed as a traitor and anti-national.

For some this psychotic behaviour may seem an aberration in a diverse country like India, yet there was a method in this RSS madness making this hateful pathogen seep deep into the power corridors and the city. This divisive and exclusionary approach may prove unproductive in another democracy, yet in Hindu India it was helping in shoring up BJP votes with vocal support for its Hindutva ideology.

The sweeping victory in the 2019 election further energized Modi and his supporters. With no holds-barred approach, the Hindutva plan was placed on a fast track mode. The first step was the illegal bifurcation of the Muslim majority state of Jammu and Kashmir on 5th August last year. To impose its will, Indian government moved over 100,000 additional troops to the Kashmir valley, cutting the telephone lines and the internet, imposing curfew, and jailing political leaders. This unprecedented lockdown continues to this day sadly pushing the innocent and hapless Kashmiris back to dark ages.



In the 16th century, the first Mughal emperor had the Jain temple of Ram in Ayodhya destroyed and a mosque built on the site. In the 1980s, the priest Mahant Avidyanath demanded justice. In 1992, his disciple, the Yogi Adityanath, called on a crowd to destroy the desecrating mosque with their bare hands.

Next on the agenda was the pending court's decision about the fate of decades old case of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. This 16th century mosque was destroyed by a Hindu mob

in 1992 in an act of political vandalism on the instigation of BJP led by none other than Modi himself triggering religious riots across India killing nearly two thousand people. The Indian Supreme Court in November last year in its 'bizarre' verdict, while terming the 1992 demolition of mosque as unlawful, handed over the property for a building a temple to the same forces responsible for the destruction in the first place. The ugly mob justice was thus ironically sanctified by the highest court of the country further pushing the India's largest religious minority to live in 'perpetual insecurity'.

Third stage of the Hindutva plan was the enactment of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which allowed religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan to acquire Indian citizenship except Muslims. The bill's anti-Muslim slant was too obvious. It was immediately criticized as anti-constitutional and was seen as part of BJP's agenda to marginalise Muslims. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Commission also filed a petition in Indian Supreme Court over the exclusionary nature of the bill.

Despite the country-wide protests against the new law which was also joined by liberal segments of the society, the BJP leadership did not budge. Instead they were now more vocal and open in their bias towards Muslims. BJP parliamentarian Subramanian Swamy in a media interview unashamedly termed Muslims as troublemakers and claimed that they did not deserve equal rights. An astonishing statement only adding to the 'toxic anti-minority discourse'.

And then it happened. A lesson was given to these 'troublemakers'. For three days in February this year, Muslim houses, businesses and worship places in north-east New Delhi were burnt and destroyed by frenzied Hindu mobs, dozens of Muslims were killed brutally while police watched silently and even facilitated the rioters. New York Times writing about Delhi Police complicity noted that this was 'the inevitable result of Hindu extremism that has flourished under the government of Narendra Modi'. Politicization of law enforcement machinery by BJP has indeed 'emboldened Hindu extremists on streets'.



In 2002, 59 Hindu pilgrims returning from Ayodhya perished in a train fire. Yogi Adityanath's followers wrongly attributed the fire to vengeful Muslims. Under the protection of the then Chief Minister of the Gurajat, Narendra Modi, they lynch more than a thousand Muslims.

The nature of New Delhi violence was hauntingly evocative of Gujrat pogrom of 2002, when over 1,000 Muslims were butchered by extremist Hindus. And then too, the state police was accused of inaction. It was no coincidence that Modi was the Chief Minister of the state at that time. For years, his entry was banned in UK and USA for his alleged role in the Gujrat killings.

Shahzaman Haque, the Director of Urdu Department at INALCO Paris, in his article about Delhi massacre wrote 'Delhi's orchestrated pogrom against Muslim community is a glimpse of the potential genocide which is lurking in our society'. Being an Indian Muslim himself, his personal pain over their fate being 'turning from second-class citizens to full pariahs' could be felt throughout the article.

It was no surprise when US Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended India to be placed on 'blacklist'. The annual report of the bipartisan panel noted the 'drastic' downward trend in the religious freedom conditions under Modi's Hindu nationalist government which 'allowed violence against minorities and their houses of worship to continue with impunity, and also engaged in and tolerated hate speech and incitement to violence.'

And now when the world is facing an unprecedented health crisis, Modi and his Hindutva supporters have found a new way to vilify Muslims by portraying them as

alleged spreaders of the coronavirus. Dedicated trolls of social media spread fake news while Islamophobic hashtags like ‘CoronaJihad’, ‘CoronaTerrorism’ and ‘BioJihad’ have created fresh grounds for anti-Muslim propaganda. Arundhati Roy reminded us that the way BJP is using Covid19 against Muslims is similar to Typhus being used by Nazi Germany against Jews to ‘stigmatise and ghettoise them’.

BJP government sadly but not surprisingly chose to fight the coronavirus pandemic by unleashing their own signature Virus of Hate. As an article in Washington Post noted ‘It didn’t take long before India’s response to the coronavirus was tainted by the kind of discrimination and Islamophobia that has characterized the nationalist administration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’.

There is no relenting to the sufferings of religious minorities in India. BJP’s nationalist agenda with all its communal colouring and selective approach is in full bloom. Today everybody is talking about the social distress and economic downturns brought about by few weeks old lockdowns to control coronavirus, yet the untold miseries caused by months old lockdown in Jammu and Kashmir have been regrettably forgotten.

The hateful pathogen propagated under Hindutva plan has already infected large sections of India with no vaccine in sight. Sadly, the international community with its own narrow considerations has been a silent spectator. Unless the conscience of the humanity is awakened, the Indian religious minorities especially the 200 million Muslims would continue to face the impending existential threat.

Let there be some sanity, some balance, a tolerant way of living. Major powers who champion democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms must play their due role and demonstrate responsibility in calling out these excesses against minorities in India. Otherwise, as noted by Riaz Muhammad Khan, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, in his recent article in Dawn newspaper, ‘the politics of exceptionalism and exclusion, hate and confrontation’ might lead the world to its ‘ruination’.

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