

# Condition of Muslims in India

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The bias against Muslims, which dates back to the pre-Independence era, continues its ugly growth in the post-Independence period. The very integrity, honesty and loyalty of Muslims have always been in question. Muslims have been considered second grade citizens. The blame of Partition has been dumped on them. Lakhs of Muslims have been massacred during diabolic communal riots across the country. Muslims have been pushed down in all spheres of life – political, educational, social and economic. To console them in their sorrowful moments, to guide them in times of trouble, to build confidence in them, to foster unity and to motivate them to assemble on a single platform and more importantly to become efficient in discharging their duties as Khair-e-Ummah, many journals, magazines, dailies, weeklies and monthlies in Urdu and some other regional languages unfailingly continued their endeavours. Still a guiding star in English was as necessary as an Oasis in a desert. *Radiance* has done this job in the post-Independence period in India. Here are some of the yeoman services *Radiance* has done during these 50 years in the context of condition of Muslims.

In the early 1960s Indian Muslims had to face an allegation from almost all the groups belonging to the majority community that Muslims were manifesting “separatism”. In its issue dated, 6 September 1964 *Radiance* argued that it is natural that in the post-Independence era Indian Muslims, utterly upset by the unprecedented ugly communal riots, chalk out a strategy to relocate themselves in the new scenario. In a multi-cultural society, be it the USA or the USSR, the existence of distinctly separate minority groups is inevitable. Such an existence need not evoke horror in the majority community.

*Radiance*, while defining what “separatism” must mean to Muslims in India, writes: “As for the Muslims, their separatism – if it must be called by that name – is based on the feeling that they have to fulfill a divine mission. Their duty is to project before the whole of mankind their exemplary conduct and to preach the divine message rather than merely to follow the footsteps of their forefathers and their countrymen. But this does not mean that the Muslims are ordained to remain aloft from the mainstream of life in their country. They must give their fullest co-operation in all the nation building and defense activities. For them it is a sin to harm their country or its people merely on account of religious differences.”

Thus *Radiance* reminds Muslims of their obligation to represent Islam by words and acts, and motivates the community to be ready to face all sorts of challenges that may arise while discharging the duty of ‘Dae Ummah’.

Time and again the irresponsible leaders and less responsible Indian media level charges against Muslims in India that they are not synchronizing with the mainstream of Indian national life. Since Independence, the R.S.S., and the then Jana Sangh and the saffron brigade have been coming out openly that there is a need to adopt ‘special measures’ to merge Indian Muslims into mainstream of Indian socio-cultural and political life. Whenever there is such a hue and cry, *Radiance* has timely responded and always made it clear that Muslims are already in the mainstream.

*Radiance* has taken strong objection and refuted the viewpoint that “Hinduism constitutes the Singular Strand of Indian life and the essential characteristic of an Indian is that he should be a Hindu. If a person is non-Hindu, he can live in India but cannot be treated as a faithful and loyal citizen of the country” (*Radiance*, 11 Oct. 1970). It has been explained that the concept of Indianness must not be taken in a narrow sense. It has also been explained that the basic question is whether there is really a mainstream in India at all? If there is one, what is it?

Since time immemorial India has been a land of pluralism and multiculturalism. Great thinkers and writers from India like Shri Aurobindo contended that India has always assimilated cultures into it even if they are alien. Aurobindo elaborated this concept in his prose work titled *Renaissance of India*. India has a beauty of a garden in which flowers with various colours and fragrances blossom. To destroy the variety of flowers and colours in a garden and to forcefully club them into one in the name of ‘mainstream’ would be unreasonable and unnatural.

Expanding this idea, Dr. M. Nejatullah Siddiqi writes in issue dated 1 April 1973: “Indian Pluralism is the Indian style of building a prosperous, peaceful, strong and good society, while injuring none, neither spiritually nor in the material sense and tapping all the energy potentials to various religious, cultural and linguistic traditions in India.” He further explains that as Muslims we share the major objectives of Indian pluralism. Islam hails the values like freedom, equality and justice; especially social justice; therefore there is no point in questioning the patriotism of Muslims.

The so-called ‘loyalists’ presume that the hard won Independence for India is without the participation of Muslims. *Radiance* very elaborately brought out historical facts and showed that it is the Muslims in the pre-Independent era, who led the freedom struggle. *Radiance* has boldly put forward that it is a well-known historical fact that Muslims of India suffered more than their Hindu counterparts in

the unforgettable struggle for India's freedom. The blood of Muslims drenched this land from north to south and west to east while fighting the onslaught of European Colonialism.

The greatest heroes of this historical freedom movement were Maulana Muhammad Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali. Prior to them, Muslim Ulema have led the freedom struggle. In its issue dated 14 January 1968, *Radiance* published a brilliant write-up by Pt. Sunder Lal. He has discussed the role of Muslims in Indian Freedom Movement unambiguously. Lal says that the blueprint of the 1857 Mutiny was actually the brainchild of Azimullah Khan. He along with Rango Bapu ji hatched and prepared the said plan. He widely travelled from England to France, Italy, Turkey and many other countries to tilt the balance of opinion of the public and the government in favour of Indian Independence.

Mr. Lal mentions names of Nawab Bahadur Khan of Bareilly and the great martyr Maulvi Ahmed Shah from Faizabad. He placed on record the cruelty with which the Muslims were meted out by the British forces as punitive measures. The massacre of Muslims continued from 1857 to 1859 and beyond. The British came down upon Muslims very heavily. They ordered that no young and able bodied Muslim should be spared. The British opined that Muslims were their real enemies. The brave mother of Ali brothers Bee Amma, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Ansari and Maulana Abdul Bari stood up and supported Gandhiji in the freedom movement.

The Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind sent all its members in jails during the freedom movement. In Jaliyanwala Baugh Muslims were also massacred. Likewise hundreds of Muslim women, men and children braved British bullets in Quissa Kahani Bazar near Peshawar. In Delhi, at Chandni Chowk many Muslims achieved martyrdom. The Sarhad Gandhi, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, is well-known as a staunch supporter of Mahatma Gandhi. Muslims actually considered it their responsibility to fight for the motherland.

In his article entitled "Forgotten Heroes of Freedom Struggle" Bilal Ahmed from Delhi (*Radiance* 6 December 1985) mentions the figures of Syed Ahmed Shaheed, Shah Ismail Shaheed, Siraj-ud-Daula and Tipu Sultan who fought tooth and nail and laid down their lives to preserve the purity and sanctity of the Indian freedom. Even after that Muslims' resistance continued unabated. Maulana Sha Abdul Quadri Ludhianavi, Maulan Fazal-e-Haq Khairabadi, Nawab Mahmood Khan, Commander Nabi Baqsh, Ashfaqullah Khan, Munshi Ahmed, Mir Abdul Sattar, Mir Mushtaq Ahmed, and Abdul Rasheed are a few names worth mentioning in this regard.

Bilal Ahmed puts on: "No truthful account of Freedom movement can be complete without the names of Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi, Maulana Ahmed Shah

Kashmiri, Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, Shaikh-ul-Islam Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madni, Maulana Mahmoodul Hasan, Mir Usman Ali Khan (The Nizam of Hyderabad) and Nawab Viqarul-Mulk (AMU), who were heart and soul of the freedom movement.” The movement started by Maulana Mahmoodul Hasan was called ‘Reshmi Roomal Tehrik’.

Manifesting how Muslims proved their loyalty in post-Independent India and how Muslims supported International Peace and sided with their motherland against Pakistan, *Radiance* quotes Prof. Hiren Mukherji’s (Leader of Communist Party of India) declaration in parliament. “The Muslims in Kashmir and other parts of India showed that they belonged to this country in life as well as in death. When Pakistan committed aggression against India in 1947 the first Indian martyr to get the “Param Vir Chakra” was Brigadier Usman. In the present action (1965) the honour went to Havaldar Abdul Hameed.”

Targeting Muslims has been an unending agenda of communal forces since pre-Independence period. The R.S.S, Jan Sangh and Shiv Sena have assumed antagonistic position against Muslims. They do not leave any stone unturned to harass and intimidate Muslims to gain cheap popularity and political advantage. Since its very first issue, *Radiance* has been giving antidote to the venom scattered by these anti-national agencies. Through its logic and reason as well as historical facts, *Radiance* came out with befitting replies to the irresponsible statements and fiery hate speeches made by the communalists. On one hand, these attempts provide the people who are carried away by the emotional blackmailing with the truth and on the other these endeavours act as confidence building measures among the Muslims. We find a number of such instances during these 50 years.

In 1969 the Shiv Sena chief Late Mr. Bal Thackeray came down heavily upon the then Government of Maharashtra, alleging the Government that it is bowing down to the unreasonable demands of Muslims. The Kalyan Muslims took objection to the permission given by the police for the Shiv Jayanti procession which was to pass through densely populated Muslim areas. Such processions always have possibility of assuming ugly shapes. Mr. Thackeray was reported as saying, “We wonder whether we live in India or Pakistan” – (*The Indian Express*, 30 April 1969).

Once, the Jan Sangh leaders took strong objection to the draft statement of Standing Committee of National Integration Council. The committee’s statement condemned the idea that a minority community need to be Indianised and it refused to accept that any minority community be unpatriotic or an agency of any foreign nation. Dr. Bhai Mahavir, the leader of Jan Sangh walked out of the committee to register his dissent and anger over this stand of the committee. The Jan Sangh

alleges that Muslims are not prepared to merge into the national mainstream. The then Prime Minister, Late Ms. Indira Gandhi inquired the Janasanghis 'where the national mainstream was'. *Radiance* has taken stock of the situation in the issue 26 October 1969. *Radiance* took Dr. Mahavir to task and brought out the shallowness of his theory by reiterating that Muslims serve the nation as well as any other community does.

In modern India the political outfit of RSS – the BJP – has tried to exploit the machinery of the government to trouble Muslims wherever possible. The party has made Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy an election issue. The BJP has led the march by 2000 *dharmacharyas* through the colonies of Delhi to campaign for the construction of Ram temple on the site of Babri Masjid. Such uncalled for actions on the part of BJP and its leaders like Madan Lal Khurana, L. K. Advani and Narendra Modi in the present era are questioned by *Radiance*. It has, at the same time, urged the Muslims to remain unprovoked. Sometimes Muslims even do not know what kinds of conspiracies are being hatched against them. Once Late Bal Thackeray opined that Muslims should be stripped off their right to vote. *Radiance* has given a tough time to supporters of such undemocratic slogan.

Dr. S. Ausaf Saied Vasfi destroys the RSS theory of Hinduisation of Islam in India. The then RSS chief Mr. Sudarshan suggested a process of de-Islamisation or de-Muslimisation which would result in Indianisation or Hinduisation of Islam. One Swami Shraddhanand offered to put idols of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) in all temples. The RSS Sarsangh Chalak went to the extent of proposing names like "Muhammad Prasad" or "Muhammad Das." Vasfi in the issue dated 11-17 March 2001 suggests to these leaders to concentrate on burning social issues like dowry deaths, discrimination on the basis of caste, and the like. "The way in which the leader of the RSS deals with this issue creates an impression that he has either not read history, sociology and psychology or he is incapable of drawing conclusions from the past." (*Radiance* 11-17 March 2001)

In the aftermath of 9/11 attack, the U.S. has launched anti-terrorism campaign which is nothing but targeting Islam and Muslims. Many nations including the right wing in India followed suit. The saffron brigade targeted madrasas (Islamic schools) in India by accusing that madrasas are breeding grounds of terrorists. They branded Madrasa-education as anti-national and madrasas as agencies promoting ISI agenda in India. *Radiance* (3-9 March 2009 and in many other issues) explained that madrasas are source of moral education. If we closely look at the role of madrasas, we find that they impart strong moral values, ethics and sound code of conduct to their students. They are agencies that strive for

reconstruction and reformation of society. They played significant role in motivating youths to participate in Indian freedom movement.

Coming to the arrests of innocent Muslims, police atrocities, in the aftermath of the 1965 war with Pakistan, many Muslims were put under detention on the accusation that they were anti-India and pro-Pakistan. Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat in its meeting held on 17 November 1965 urged the Government of India to release the innocent Muslims. Taking cue from this, *Organiser*, the mouthpiece of Jan Sangh came out with a bitter criticism of Majlis' demand. In its issue dated 19 December 1965, *Radiance* gave apt reply to the questions raised by *Organiser* in its editorial. *Radiance* quotes the Ex-Mayor of Lucknow, Captain V.R. Mohan, who says, "If somebody has saved the borders of India... it was 235-man platoon led by Param Vir Chakra winner Havildar Abdul Hameed." (*Radiance*, 19 Decemer 1965). Here it was also mentioned that in Bikaner area Muslims valiantly resisted the inroads made by the Pakistani Jawans.

During the last two decades, arrests of innocent Muslims as a punitive action have become everyday phenomenon in India. Each and every incident like 1993 serial bomb blasts in Mumbai, Malegaon bomb blasts in 2006, Mecca Masjid bomb blast in A.P, German Bakery explosion Pune, attack on Parliament 2001, Coimbatore bomb blast in 1998 and many other such incidents pointed out needle of suspicion towards Muslims alone. The draconian laws like TADA, MISA, MCOCOA and many other similar provisions have equipped the police with powers to harass, intimidate and torture Muslims time and again. *Radiance* represented the case of the innocent and brought the facts to the fore.

In its issue dated 30 September 2007, *Radiance* wonders why Muslims are arrested in a selective manner whenever a terror attack occurs, while there is ample proof of involvement of Bajrang Dal and other Sangh Parivar activists in such attacks. *Radiance* also took the Maharashtra Government to task for not having political will to implement Shrikrishna Commission report. *Radiance* brought to light the atrocities of police against Muslims. The inhuman treatments meted out to Hafiz Muhammad Bilal Muftahi (he was severely, kicked, beaten with sticks) and Abdul Kareem (he was given electric shocks even in his private parts. He was kicked by boots on face. The police threatened to make his mother and sister naked). Ibrahim Ali Junaid, a final year medical student, was picked up in connection with Mecca Masjid and Gokol Chat blasts (at night they took off his clothes and beat him with belt) are just some instances.

*Radiance* has always stood with innocent victims and continued its journalistic support through its plea to report the London based minority rights group, which was released in New-Delhi. *Radiance* has repeatedly been saying that Muslims are

arrested and forced to confess crimes they have not committed. It has commented upon the double standards of the government and on the callous attitude of the ministers and the indifference of major political parties on this issue.

Commenting on the poor representation of Muslims in public services, *Radiance* has served two purposes. On one hand, it pointed out the biased and prejudiced attitude of recruiting agencies and on the other it informed the Muslims of their place and position in this context, and urged them to awaken from deep slumber. *Radiance* motivates Indian Muslims to improve to vie, to compete and to make room for themselves to get a fair share of the national cake.

In its issue dated 3 October 1965, *Radiance* wrote that the suspicion about the bona fides of the Indian Muslims is the reason for their dismal recruitment in the armed forces. In 19 August 1993 issue, *Radiance* published a statement showing the number of Muslims employed in Class I and Class II (Ministry-wise) posts as on 31-03-1971. The percentage was merely 1.7%. This is not at all in proportion with Muslim population in India. *Radiance* has warned that the tall claims of our leaders to achieve social equality and economic justice in India will be meaningless until the minorities are given fair representation in services especially in Police, Judiciary and Armed Forces. In 2 April 1978 issue, *Radiance* published the veteran communist leader E.M.S Nambudripad's statement that it is deliberate policy against Muslims' representation in services. In order to bring the facts to the fore a table has been published in 11-17 July 1999 issue showing that, in the year 1981, in IAS cadre, there were 3883 officers; out of them Muslims were only 116. In IPS rank total officers were 1753 and out of them Muslims were only 50. In banks the total number of employees was 11,377,275, out of which Muslims were only 2,479.

*Radiance* has taken a leading role in safeguarding life, property, culture, language, traditions, religious credentials, properties of Awqaf, provisions for Haj and Muslim Personal Law. In May 6-12, 1984 issue *Radiance* came out with concrete measures to be adopted by Muslims in India to maintain optimum literacy rate. *Radiance* highlighted the Sachar Committee Report 2006. It has been a comprehensive report on economic, social, educational and political backwardness of Muslims in India. It is based on the facts and figures provided by various government agencies only. The report, according to *Radiance*, is a proof in itself that even after six decades of independence Muslims could not get the fair share in the developmental schemes. This large chunk of population got reduced to the level of STs and SCs.

In its issue dated 25 November 2007, *Radiance* informed its readers about the formation of Joint Committee of Muslim Organizations for Empowerment

(JCMOE). The Joint Committee has prepared a charter of demands for Muslims' welfare; *Radiance* states that Sachar Committee is a wake-up call to the Muslim leadership in India. Thus a lot has been done through the medium of *Radiance* in bringing the efforts of Muslim organizations to the notice of Muslims who are ignorant of Urdu (at least who cannot read Urdu).

In identifying, analyzing and suggesting solutions to various problems of Muslims, the issues of *Radiance* dated 23 June 1985, 2 September 1990, 14 August 1994 and 29 October 1995 are worth reading. Renowned scholars like Dr. Abdul Moghni have contributed to these issues.

*Radiance* also played a vital role in motivating Muslims to stand up to the situation and in promoting confidence building measures. In an article entitled 'Muslims Must Rise from the Ashes' in December 1992, Sayyid Hamid, former Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, puts in, "Indian Muslims should help build a country where justice would prevail. The venom that this century inherited and to which it made immense additions should be washed out before the 21st Century opens its account." The write-up underpins a piece of advice that appears sound, "Muslims do not seem to realize that the fight is unequal and that in it they would be the ultimate losers. It is therefore, high time that the Muslim leaders rose above petty squabbles and cheap sentimentalism. They should continue to counsel restraint, heal wounds, organize relief, put up defenses and simultaneously start thinking about a re-orientation that should be imaginative as it would be realistic."