

Opinion | Yet Another Storm in A Teacup: How The Hijab Row in India Is A Manufactured Controversy

news18.com/news/opinion/opinion-yet-another-storm-in-a-teacup-how-the-hijab-row-in-india-is-a-manufactured-controversy-6063811.html

September 29, 2022

By: Zeba Zoariah

Muslim women in India are through any legality or mandate by the government, not dictated to remove the hijab/niqab/burqa/abaya. File pic/PTI

Muslim women are waiting for reform, and change, and no one has the right to interfere in their path towards progress

“Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what they do.”(QS. An-Noor 24: Verse 30)

“And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment.”(QS. An-Noor 24: Verse 31)

Women using veils was a practice that pre-dates Islam and was a common practice among the elite in Arabia. In fact, veiling was practised extensively in the past among the women of the Jewish and Christian communities and can be even found today among the more orthodox and conservative sections of society such as the nunnery. Then why is the controversy over hijab such a major issue in light of the events that transpired in an educational institution in Karnataka? Some argue that while religions like Judaism and Christianity have gone far ahead in terms of women’s rights, that may not be the case with Islam.

Advertisement

Ever since the end of World War II and the emergence of liberalism globally, the Islamic world has remained in constant turmoil. While leaders like Egypt’s Nasser and the Shah of Iran steered their countries towards progress and Westernisation, there equally was a sentiment among the more conservative and religious sections of society. A famous speech by Nasser from 1958, on his interaction with the Muslim Brotherhood and their idea of veiling women, was laughed at by the audience gathered. Similarly, Iran and Afghanistan were firmly on the path of progress with women enjoying the freedoms that any liberal Western country had. However, for various reasons, geopolitical, political, religious, or otherwise, to restrict the freedom of women.

RELATED STORIES

- [Iranian Women Roar Against Hijab Rules After Mahsa Amina's Death: News18 Explains Row & Protests](#)
- [Muslim Bodies Protest at Kerala School Where Girl Dropped Out for Not Being Allowed to Wear Hijab](#)



Women, naturally, at the receiving end of these patriarchal impositions, had no choice but eventually buckle down to religious authority. Regime changes during the Cold War-era geopolitical contestations in Iran, Afghanistan, etc, have brought in devastation and restriction of freedoms. These totalitarian regimes backed with religious authority meant women had second-class status in society and were seen solely as objects that needed protection. With the emergence of Salafist and Wahhabi conservative Islam, the desire among the patriarchs of the Islamic society to veil women got stronger and was seen as a sort of resistance movement against Westernisation and modernisation.



Coming back to the bone of contention, i.e., the hijab controversy in Karnataka. Ever since the issue came to light, there has been a lot of propaganda and hit pieces alleging how [India](#) under the [Narendra Modi](#) administration has left no stone unturned in persecuting the country's largest minority community. Parallels are being drawn to how Jews under Hitler were persecuted leading up to the Holocaust. The outrage is not limited to Indian liberal-left media houses but has spilled over into international media as well. What is ironic, however, is how parallels are being drawn between Indian Muslim students protesting to wear hijabs in educational institutions and Iranian women protesting hijab mandates by the Iranian regime under Khamenei.

This should honestly not come as a surprise at all given the zombies that the Indian "intellectual" liberal-left ecosystem is and how morally bankrupt they are, inhaling and exhaling hypocrisy with every breath. First of all, Muslim women are through any legality or mandate by the government, not dictated to remove the hijab/niqab/burqa/abaya. This, however, is not the case in Iran, where the Islamist regime imposes mandatory veiling of women in public places. Secondly, educational institutions exercise autonomy on what attire is permitted and what is not. That is because of security-related issues as well as ensuring there is uniformity in places of learning. There are several instances of Christian missionary-run institutions in India, that have prohibited girls from wearing bindi and bangles and boys from sporting tilak. How come that never was an issue all these years?

Advertisement

Arguments bereft of sound logic and intellectual depth, riling up sentiments, and pushing mobs on streets seems to be the only option left for India's incompetent and deracinated opposition. Using straw man fallacies seems to be the way forward indicating the opposition's imminent trajectory heading towards yet another mega electoral failure in 2024. By far the most pedestrian argument during this saga seems to be the one that

states “hijab is a choice”. As Iranian anti-hijab activist Masih Alinejad points out, “Women are indoctrinated right from childhood on how hijab is an extension of their personality and how without hijab, they are not worthy of calling themselves a woman. Although there is this argument among Western liberals and by extension Indian liberals that hijab is ‘optional’, women in regimes like Iran have only one choice and that is to wear hijab.”

Hence, there is no room for any sense of dichotomy here, any patriarchal imposition on women, including the hijab, is something that has to be seen solely from that point of view. The tragedy, however, is how innumerable women, who may want to liberate themselves from such impositions, are either scared of the consequences or remain silent spectators. Their stories are never heard and the Indian liberal-left is gagging them and robbing them of any chance to come out and speak. Kowtowing to Islamists and Islamist propagandists seems to be the most “progressive” option adopted by the Indian liberal-left ecosystem. What is tragic is how such logic not only permeates the so-called “intellectual” class that eventually feeds into policy but also sections of the Indian judiciary. What is nonetheless deeply regrettable is how Indian feminism has relegated itself to pandering to Islamists, just because the administration of Delhi is something they do not like.

Advertisement

Muslim women are waiting for reform, and change, and no one, I emphasise no one, has the right to interfere in their path towards progress. By politicising issues, Indian feminists and the liberal-left may score some brownie points from their white masters in the West but are involved in irreparable damage to the cause of Indian Muslim women and their rights. If you can not break the shackles of your own self-serving ideology, and remain slaves to your own inferiority complex, then let me tell you that you are merely a pawn and a useful idiot for those who try to control you and your mind. In conclusion, a short message to the liberal-left: Does it not prick your conscience to support the most regressive mindset on planet earth?

Manufactured controversies are mere storms in teacups; they won’t change political discourse but your betrayal of Muslim women will go down in history.

Zeba Zoariah holds a BA degree in Global Affairs and is currently a final-year LLB student from OP Jindal Global University. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not represent the stand of this publication.