The changing face of islamism though its colonial history

The Changing Face of Islamism though its Colonial History By Devangini Mahapatra Chauhan Revolutions have marked major changes on our timescapes forcenturies now, merging very effectively into the concept of modernity in the process - thus propagating the belief that modernism is from revolution, and vice versa. Color, race, creed and caste lose all value when a revolution gains momentum. In context of the case before us, it has been observed that religion has surrendered to the tide of such movements. The religion in question is Islam.

The Islam world has, over a vast period of time, provided a myriad of colors in its various representations and colonial history. Whether it was ruled by empires essentially Arab like those of the Ottoman, Arab, Iranian, or other Western superpowers, Islam has seemed to have made the most of these influences. But a more critical review is required to demonstrate whether this is entirely true in the face of Islam's stringent value system and lofty ideals, which are known to purport into every aspect of an individual's life. This paper seeks to explore the aspect of influences on the representation of Islam, from a critical point of view.

To make our point more clear before proceeding to assess various influences that brought Islamism to where it now stands, it would be imperative to delve into a brief history of the colonial trends seen in the Islam world. Peculiar in its adoption of revolution which triggers modernity, Islamism has come to borrow ideas from the " social movement theory" in order to assist social scientists as they endeavor to study Islamism. Thus, we will find historical and structural explanations by linking Islamism to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, as well as the disappearance of caliphate as a symbol

of Muslim unity. Further, the legacies of the Crusades and western imperialism, fundamentalist interpretations about the life of the Prophet and the Jihad apart from the American presence in Saudi Arabia and the war in Iraq have fuelled negative emotions such as frustration and humiliation. Played up by the effects of Soviet policies, the alliance between Israel and the United States has given way to a cultural shock related to the " discovery" of the American way of life with the so called the corruption of Muslim rulers and, more generally, a search for new " prescriptions" after the " failure of modernization" in Muslim societies. (A. R Norton, 2000. p. 3 - 7)

Over the past decade, there has been a notable effort on the part of a majority of Islamic movement specialists in context of bridging the gap between the study of Islamic activism and social science theories of collective action. Despite the fact that this new approach to Islamic activism de-emphasizes ideology and belief as causal variables, it has been noticed that the role of ideas is not completely rejected or underrated. Instead, the focus has been on the study of patterns surrounding the process in which ideas are socially created, arranged, and disseminated. In other words, the emphasis is on the process of constructing discourse, and the resulting ideational packages. In the parlance of social movement theory, movements must " frame" their arguments to persuade audiences and elicit support and participation.

Where the influence of the various worlds is concerned, the one constant is the fact that there have been instances where Islamists construct frames that meld religious and non-religious themes to reach broader audiences. Appeals to nationalism, tribal symbolism, and even human rights have been intertwined with religion in ideational packages. The eclectic nature of such

frames demonstrates the strategic dimension of framing: content is frequently selected according to its potential persuasive effect rather than solely on the basis of ideology, with a subconscious return on the part of leaders to " reIslamisation". (Asef Bayat, 2005. p. 891-918)

In conclusion, as a result of the finding that framing is not everything in social movement theory; it should be realized that deprivation and frustration cannot fully explain the rise of Islamism since misery does not lead necessarily to mobilization. Mobilization of resources, decision-making and framing should also be taken into account. In this context, Islam has become a factor of revolution as well as its target, with many men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan feeling the debilitating effects of the religious state, in their daily lives, work and public sphere. With this part of world seeing itself as " historical victims", there is scope for higher improvement.

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