Chapter Six
ISLAMOPHOBIA: WAYS, FOUNDATIONS AND GOALS

Islamophobia, a recently coined term, is defined as an obsessive fear of Islam. A phenomenon, spread mostly throughout the United States and Western Europe, with sophisticated tools such as propaganda and mass media. It deplored expressions of anti-Islamic, anti Arab, and anti-Semitic sentiments that have been on the increase in the west today or following 9/11.

Islamophobia as a term and as a phenomena gained currency impart due to the popular thesis developed by Frances Fukuyana and Samuel Huntington that argued as impending clashing of civilization between Islam and west. Islamophobia has resulted in general and unquestioned acceptance of the following:

- Islam is monolithic and cannot adapt to new realities.
- Islam does not share common values with other major faiths.
- Islam as a religion is inferior to the west. It is archaic, barbaric and irrational.
- Islam is a religion of violence and supports terrorism.
- Islam is a violent political ideology.¹

Such biased attitudes are present despite the fact that Muslim contributions played a significant part in developing a civilization in Europe. History books record the first Muslim arrival in American in 1312 when Mansa Abu Bakr travelled from Mali to South America. Of the estimated 10 million African slaves that came to America a significant percentage was Muslim.² Yet Islam and Muslims remain in Europe and America embedded in stereotypical assumptions and misguided pronouncements regarding beliefs, attitudes and customs.

In 2006 the council on American-Islamic relation (CAIR) conducted a survey of American Muslim Voters.³ The results of survey showed that American Muslims are integrated in American society.⁴ Despite such integrative attitude the rise of anti-Muslim sentiment in the US creates tension and hinders quicker integration of Muslims. Islamophobia prevents meaningful engagement with Muslim community so Muslims are virtually excluded from high level policy making and media.⁵ There are some of the results of American public attitude towards Islam and Muslim.

Almost 4 in 10 Americans have an unfavourable view of Islam, about the same no. that have a favourable view.

A plurality of Americans (46 percent) believe that Islam is more likely than other religions to encourage violence among its believers.6

ABC News March, 2005 Poll:

Four months after 9/11, 14 percent believed mainstream Islam encourages violence; today its 34 percent.

Today 43 percent think Islam does not teach respect for the beliefs of non-Muslims- up sharply from 22 percent.

People who feel they do understand Islam are much more likely to view it positively. Among Americans who feel they do understand the religion 59 percent call it peaceful and 46 percent think it preaches respect for the belief of others.7

Cornell University study:

In all, about 44 percent said they believe that some curtailment of civil liberties is necessary for Muslim Americans.

26 percent said they think that mosques should be closely monitored by US Law enforcement agencies.

29 percent agreed that undercover law enforcement agents should infiltrate Muslim civic and volunteer organizations, in order to keep tabs on their activities and fund raising.8

Such public attitude translates into discrimination, exclusion and violence. In 2005 CAIR (Council of American-Islamic Relations) processed a total of 1,972 civil rights complaints, compared to 1,522 cases reported to CAIR in 2004. These constitute a 29.6 percent increase in total number of complaints of anti-Muslim harassment, violence and discriminatory treatment from 2004. In addition, CAIR received 153 reports of anti-Muslim hate crime complaints, an 8.6 percent increase from the 141 complaints received in 2004.9

THE REAL GLOBAL BEGINNING:

While the overt manifestation of this mind set surfaced strongly after 9/11 but the real global beginning of these propagations started with the overthrow of Reza shah Pahlavi, a US stooge, from Iran. It is at that time that Ayatullah Khomeini assumed power. Around this time socialists systems started weakening
and collapsed shortly thereafter. Islam was presented as the new threat to freedom and liberty. During the cold war the slogan which the US and its allies used against the anti colonial struggles under the banner of communism was freedom and democracy. Since many anti-colonial nationalist struggles were fought under the banner of communism. It was projected as the main threat to freedom and democracy. For the propagation of Islamophobia, the story may also begin with the tyrannical Saddam rule, the fact that he was armed to teeth by the same powers that are now rampaging Iraq, is just under the carpet. Basically the political goals are presented as religious goal and the politics itself is hidden in the cloak of religion.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF CREATING ISLAMOPHOBIA:-

Ignorance is the mother of prejudice, hate, and fear- a saying which proves its correctness in America, where Islamophobia had an excellent chance of success due to ignorance of Islam amongst the masses.

There are some groups who joined the anti Islam campaign such as secular fundamentalists (atheists and agnostics), Christian fundamentalist who took up the work of attacking the religious aspects of belief and Islam’s political, economic and cultural system academically using Muslim sources. The Qur’an is under attack not only physically but academically by them like Peter the venerable, Martin Luther etc to prove that Islam was a corrupted Jewish Christian copy, based on forged Hadith, without any originality or saving grace. The lead article of the January 1999 issue of the Atlantic Monthly raised many issues concerning the origins and integrity of the Qur’ân.

FORCES AGAINST ISLAM:¹²

There is much opposition to Islam in America in the political scenario. Jerry Falwell, Franklin Graham, Pat Robertson, Robert Morey, Daniel pipes, Joshan Katz, Bill O’ Reilly, Steve Emerson, Sean Hannity, Rush Limbaugh, Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington, Henry Kissinger and hundreds of other lesser known enemies of Islam including a few senators and congressman are very active in creating hate against Islam and Muslims.
FOUNDATIONS AGAINST ISLAM:  


To progress the work against Islam is supported by a number of multi-billion dollar foundations, such as the smith Richardson Foundation, INC in Greensboro, North Carolina, John M. Olin Foundation in New York, the Sarah Seaife Foundation, Seafe Family Foundation, Allegheny Foundation, Carthage Foundation, all four located in Pittsburg, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation Inc. of Milwankee and many Christian fundamentalist church related organizations.

Enquiring about the estimates, which anti-Islamic groups are spending, is as much as three billion dollars annually to fight Islam intellectually, theologically, socially, economically and politically. Hundreds of Islam hate flyers, brochures, tracts, booklets and books are being distributed free by the millions all over the US and abroad. There are over 1,000 anti-Islam websites. Some of which are supported by multi-million dollar budgets annually. In addition, there are over 2000 Christian organization spreading their own Islam-hate material world wide.

The Muslim masses are sick and tired of hypocrisy and the double standard of the west particularly the US government. They are frustrated of American appointed and supported dictatorship all over the Muslim World.

DEEP ROOTS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA:-

In the year 700, Islam and the Arabic language were on the move. At that time Europe was in its dark ages', nursing its dwindling links to a dead Roman Culture. Arabic scholarship, Science and invention surpassed Europe in every way. Arabic scholars would soon include Greeks, Persian, Indians, Africans,
Christians, Jews and more. Four hundred years later, Europe began to catch on. But very few in Europe could even read Greek; the Arabs were already rescuing the genius of ancient Greece from oblivion. They translated Greek learning and art into Arabic and brought it back to life in Islamic culture. For centuries, the fundamental texts of budding European Scholarship were based on Arabic translations and Europe’s scholarship continued to be informed by its more learned Arabic contemporaries. European learned Greek heritage by translating the Arabic translation into Latin.\textsuperscript{16}

Infact the works of the sages of ancient Greece were not only rescued, collected and preserved by the Arabs, they were profusely commented and improved upon. Complete works of Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Apollonius, Ptolemy, Hypocrites, Galen, Socrates, Pythagoras, the whole Pantheon of Greek learning and art were translated and made available to the fathers of modern Europe at first only in Arabic versions, accompanied by erudite commentaries.\textsuperscript{17}

Modern Europe learned from the Arabs not only medicine and mathematics. The science of astronomy, which widens the vision of man and reveals before him the mechanical laws of nature, was zealously cultivated by the Arabs. With the aid of new instruments of observation, Arab Philosophers acquired exact knowledge about the circumference of the earth, the position and number of planets. There are many examples, including the Arabic roots of European music and musical instruments: even the engines of our world dominance are building, with intellectual hand tools forged in the Muslim world.\textsuperscript{18}

At another place the author mentioned that the science of chemistry owes its origin and initial developments to the history of the Arabs “They first invented and named the alembic for the purpose of distillation; analyzed the substances of the three kingdom of nature; tried the distinction and affinities of alkalis and acids; and converted the precious minerals into soft and salutary medicine”.\textsuperscript{19}

Fibonacci wrote his libber abaci to introduce modern (Arabic) numerals and the Hindi-Arabic decimal system to a Europe still muddling with Roman numerals. Although Algebra had been invented by Diaphanous of Alexandria, but the word ‘Algebra’ is Arabic from the book Hisab al jabr wal muqabala written around 830 by the renowned astronomer and mathematician Mohammad Ibn Musa al Khwarizmi. 310 years later when it was translated into Latin, caused a sensation
in Europe. The concept of zero was also vital to the growth of Europe. Where would Newton have been without the Arabs? On what would he and Leibniz have based the calculus? Whither Maxwell and Einstein, without Islam? How can European receive such gifts and perpetually rebuke the giver? As a matter of fact, the name of the science has given currency to the theory of its Arabian origin. But the Arabs themselves modestly acknowledged their indebtedness to the Greek master.  

In the book Islam at the Crossroads, Mohammad Asad has rightly said that what the Arabs had done was more than a mere revival of old Greece. They had created an entire new scientific world of their own, and developed then unknown avenues of research and philosophy. And they communicated this knowledge through different channels to the western world. And it is not too much to say that the modern scientific age in which we are living at present was not initiated in the cities of Christian Europe, but in such Islamic centres. Such as Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, Cordova, Nishapur and Samarkand.  

REASONS FOR IGNORANCE:-

In the words of noted Islamic Scholar Late Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, “There is not a single sector of European revival which is not indebted to Islamic thought. Islam imparted a new glow of life to Europe.”

Strangely, despite this proven fact when we hear the word “science” our attention is surely drawn to the west. The reality that they learned it all from Islamic intellectual superiors has been blotted out of western history for a thousand years. There are two reasons for it. One is that biased historians ignored most of the names of Muslim scientists. The second, even if they mentioned some of them, those too were distorted. Take for the instance, Abu Ali Sina is known as Avicenna, Zakariyyah Al-Razi as Razes, Jabir Ibu Hayyan as Gabber and Ibn Rushd as Averroes and so on.

Al-Kindi, Al- Hassan, Al- Farabi, Avicena, Al Ghazali, Abu Bakr, Avempace, Al- Phetragius – these are names memorable in the annals of human culture; and the fame of the great Averroes has been immortalized as that of the man who made the forerunners of modern civilization acquainted with the genius of Aristotle, thereby giving an inestimable impetus to the struggle of European humanity to liberate itself, from the paralyzing influence of theological bigotry and sterile scholasticism.
MAJOR GOALS BEHIND ISLAMOPHOBIA:

From the Khomeini led revolution in Iran, to Saddam Hussein invasion of Kuwait, to the bombing of the world trade centre, the American people have been subjected to relentless anti-Muslim indoctrination. It is imbibed with their mother’s milk, stereotyped in their movies, spelled out on television, their daily paper offers them headlines that tell them all they need to know, politicians and presidents sanctimoniously thrive on it because U.S. want to control all oil resources, in the guise of helping Muslims, their countries are exploited, with the excuse of open ended ‘war on terror’, they help Justify enormous increase in defence and security budget.

All this hate, prejudice against Islam and all this Islamophobia is a next crime against humanity by a secular western power. The way forward is to develop a sense of urgency that Islamophobia ought to be made unacceptable just racism and anti-Semitism. Opinion leaders should view Islam, a faith with diversity, internal differences, having much in common with Christianity and Judaism, as distinctly different but not deficient, and as a partner in America’s future.

REFERENCES/ENDNOTES:
4. Ibid


13. Ibid


19. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* quoted from M. N. Roy, p. 68


23. Ibid

24. M. N. Roy, pp. 59-60
