[**To shun the poisoned chalice**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1694741/to-shun-the-poisoned-chalice)

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HAS anger in Muslim countries against hate-spewing members of the BJP done Indian Muslims a favour? The answer lies in the running news story. Read it carefully.

“Over [300 people have been arrested](https://www.dawn.com/news/1694268) from eight districts of Uttar Pradesh so far by the police in connection with Friday’s violence during protests against the controversial remarks” (against the Prophet [PBUH]).

The *Financial Express* report gave details. Of the total 316 people, 92 people were arrested in Prayagraj, 79 in Saharanpur, 51 in Hathras, 34 in Ambedkar Nagar, 35 in Moradabad, 15 in Firozabad, six in Aligarh and four in Jalaun. Of the 13 cases, three cases each were registered in Prayagraj and Saharanpur, and one each in Firozabad, Ambedkar Nagar, Moradabad, Hathras, Aligarh, Lakhimpur Kheri and Jalaun.

“Meanwhile, bulldozers were out in Prayagraj, Saharanpur and Kanpur, r[azing ‘illegal’ houses](https://www.dawn.com/news/1694558/houses-razed-as-india-steps-up-crackdown-to-stop-unrest) of the accused for the second day.” Muslims protesting insult to their religion are being treated as hoodlums or worse.

A quick scan reveals a tragic pattern. Muslims have been waging bitter wars against fellow Muslims, their current quarry being Yemen.

Indian Muslims have been served a poisoned chalice. A range of countries voiced their anger over hateful remarks targeting Islam. The anger though does not flow from sympathy for India’s Muslims. Besides, the insulting comments were offensive not only to Muslims but also to anyone opposed to Islamophobia, an Anglo-Israeli invention spawned by the 1973 Arab oil embargo against the US.

**Read**: [*Indian Muslim groups urge followers to shun protests over anti-Islam comments*](https://www.dawn.com/news/1694613/indian-muslim-groups-urge-followers-to-shun-protests-over-anti-islam-comments)

Did the angry countries ever care about the tribulations of 200 million Muslims in India or about Muslims of any other country for that matter, including their own? That’s a harder question to answer. How many of these outraged nations have actually stood up — as distinct from the occasional lip service — for, say, the Palestinians or the Kashmiris or Rohingya, in their heartrending plight? And where are they on the miserable fate that has befallen a once bewitching Kabul, which a few of them helped liberate from communist rule on behalf of the West, with money and arms?

A quick scan reveals a tragic pattern. Muslims have been waging bitter wars against fellow Muslims, their current quarry being Yemen. The bloodiest and most damaging conflict in recent memory lasted for eight horrendous years and devastated the two most powerful and prosperous Muslim adversaries, Iran and Iraq. Later Turkey and Gulf states joined hands to devastate Syria. And look how they have joined the plunder of Libya. We haven’t even begun to discuss the biliousness of the alleged Islamic State towards Muslims.

What then should Indian Muslims do about the oppression unleashed on them under Prime Minister Modi’s watch, in particular, while ignoring the unneeded sympathy from abroad? They have been targeted for everything from their food and clothing style to inter-religious marriages. Rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have warned that attacks could escalate.

Whatever be their response to the injustices, Indian Muslims need to scrupulously avoid being dragged into the Hindu-Muslim adversarial trap, the so-called 80:20 confrontation, laid for them, among others, by the priest-politician ruling Uttar Pradesh. A truer question could be: are the Muslims alone in being targeted unfairly, if not, have they considered joining hands with those that are? Recent episodes do indicate a wide base of solidarity. The campaign against biased citizenship laws that essentially target Muslims was led by courageous Muslim women, but it would not have been half as impressive without the unflinching support and involvement of practically every religious and ethnic community of India.

For a variety of reasons that are at least a hundred years old, Muslims provide higher traction than anyone else to the state-backed agenda of communal polarisation. It is not that others, for example, Indian Christians or Sikhs have not suffered from the slings and arrows of communalism. But Muslims for a number of historical and social reasons make the best material to exploit communally. Insiders say that such is the dire urgency that it isn’t unusual to invent ‘Muslim representatives’ and invite them to divisive TV debates. Such contrived shows are common where Muslim interlocutors including those from Pakistan end up hurting the standing of Indian Muslims as a secular political force. It is apparently not uncommon for zealous channels to keep an inventory of attires that would make guests look ‘visually Muslim’, the purpose being to popularise a caricature of the community as essentially fanatical and violent.

**Read more**: [*By unleashing brute force of law against Muslim citizens, the BJP has ignited fires of communalism*](https://www.dawn.com/news/1694593/editorial-by-unleashing-brute-force-of-law-against-muslim-citizens-the-bjp-has-ignited-fires-of-communalism)

There are those that are nudging the community towards violence, and there are those that are provoking it, fortunately unsuccessfully so far. Yielding to violence would inevitably hasten the demise of the dream that the Indian constitution was built on, and which the current rulers of India have set out to destroy. They have in their ranks those who feel truly suffocated by Gandhiji’s alternative vision to colonial rule. They have in their midst desperate and brainwashed men and women, worshippers of Gandhi’s killers and detractors of Nehru’s pursuit of the scientific spirit as counter to pervasive superstition and ignorance.

Muslims need to avoid the temptation to respond to the daily provocations alone. The only agreeable and democratically potent way forward is to join hands with the other abused and violated communities and to thus rally support for political change, bereft of impulsive responses. Only political change can quell the tide of hate. Together, Indian Muslims and their other Indian allies can say loudly how they love their country but not the system that violates the constitution created to protect them. Isn’t that what the ruling establishment also says albeit with an opposite purpose, that they are the biggest patriots of India though not quite the greatest admirers of its secular constitution?

Yet there are exhorters to violence and they may not be much different from those who have thrown the Ukrainians to the wolves, the difference being that nobody is going pass a $40 billion budget to defend religious freedoms in India. Again, read the news.

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