

DISCRIMINATION OF CASTE, COLOR, NATIONALITY AND RACE: STUDY FROM ISLAMIC POINT OF VIEW

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ABSTRACT

There are diverse people living in this world with caste, color, nationality and race. On the basis of Caste, Color, Race and Nationality lots of discrimination, humiliation, social injustice, and inequality are going on in the modern society. One of the most controversial issues regarding Indian society and culture is its stringent caste system. It can be defined as a rigid social system in which a social hierarchy is maintained through generation to generation and allow little mobility out of the position to which a person is born. In this research, it has been introduced briefly the different types of discrimination in our society. Qualitative method has been used in this research. It is found, on the basis of skin color, nationality and race, people get priority in various sectors like in jobs, visa of different countries to travel and other facilities which Islam does not approve. The foundations of the social system of Islam rest on the belief that all human beings are equal and constitute one single fraternity. By following Islamic brotherhood principal as well as United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we can reduce this discrimination to a great extent.

Keywords: *Caste, Nationality, Race, Diversity, Equality, Islam.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Allah, the Almighty has created thousands of creation in the world and human being is the best among them. Humankind are different in face, color, nationality and race. It is the diversity, beauty and greatness of Allah's creation. Because of the different geographical location and different climates, people's skin color, growth and physical structure become different. Allah, the Almighty has not given any priority to community or to anyone on the basis of their color, caste and nationality but Allah has given respect and honor to humankind on the basis of His consciousness (*Taqwa*). It was also reflected by the quote of prophet Mohammad (SW) that there are no differences between Arab and Non-Arab (SahihAl-Bukhari-No.1623). Everyone was equally treated by prophet Mohammad (SW). But in this human society, we find lots of discrimination among the humankind on the basis of their caste, skin color, and nationality. In our modern and educated society, it is also increasing in different ways. But The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a declaration adopted by the United Nations' General Assembly on 10 December 1948, Article one describes that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood (United Nations-2015). Islamic Ideology and Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflected the same theme but in the practice among the humankind we find the difference. There are huge discriminations are going on in many societies, many countries, almost every level and every day in our life. In this paper researcher attempts to find some common discrimination going on in our society, in the world as well as try to find ways to reduce this discrimination by practicing Islamic values in our life.

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2. OBJECTIVE OF THIS RESEARCH

Discrimination, a common phenomenon of our society, has long been practiced from generation to generation in different forms. But these discriminations cause many social conflicts and hindrance of development. The objective of this research is to make aware of social discrimination happening in our society in different forms and to present some ways of reducing to some extent by practicing religious values especially Islamic values.

3. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH:

This is a qualitative research work which has been done mainly by studying secondary sources like journals, books, reports, different treatise. It also has been included experiences gathered by living and traveling in different multicultural societies of different countries in the world. The references from the holy Qur'an have been used as primary source.

4. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

4.1. Definition of Discrimination

Scholars have given definition of discrimination in different ways. Treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people, because of their skin color, sex, sexuality, etc., is called discrimination (Cambridge Dictionary-2015). The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex is called discrimination (Oxford Dictionaries-2015). Discrimination is on the bias or prejudice resulting in denial of opportunity, or unfair treatment regarding selection, promotion, or transfer. Discrimination is practiced commonly on the grounds of age, disability, ethnicity, origin, political belief, race, religion, sex, etc. factors which are irrelevant to a person's competence or suitability (Business Dictionary-2015) "Discrimination can be defined as the differential treatment of individuals, based on their membership in a particular group. Such treatment often be motivated by prejudice, but it may also result ethnocentric feelings that are devoid of animus" (Roy, 2010, p-343).

Discriminatory traditions, policies, ideas, practices, and laws exist in many countries and institutions in every part of the world, even in ones where discrimination is generally looked down upon. In some places, controversial attempts such as quotas have been used to benefit those believed to be current or past victims of discrimination—but have sometimes been called reverse discrimination themselves. For an example; discrimination is when a company refuses to hire women because they are women. Finally we can say that discrimination distinguishing differences between things or treating someone as inferior based on their race, sex, national origin, age or other characteristics.

4.2. Discrimination of the Basis of Caste

There are diverse people live in this world with different caste, color, nationality and race. On the basis of caste, color, nationality and race, lots of discrimination, humiliation, social injustice, inequality are going in the modern society. One of the most controversial topics regarding to India's society and culture is its stringent caste system. The word "caste" comes from the Portuguese word *casta*. It can be defined as a rigid social system in which a social hierarchy is maintained generation after generation and allow little mobility out of the position to which a person is born. According to Human Rights Watch and UNICEF, caste discrimination affects an estimated 250 million people worldwide (Human Rights Watch-2011). This system dates almost 3000 years back and was formed based on the need to form a social order in ancient India. It is still very prevalent as part of India's society. Today, it occurs more in the rural villages than in big urban cities; and more in the social matters of kinship and marriages than in impersonal day-to-day interaction, such as taking the bus. (Skumarvignesh-2010) Having been around for centuries, it is highly doubtful that

the caste system will die out completely. Its presence will still be felt in the near future. So far the Dalits of India is concerned, they are the most deprived and marginalized communities in Indian society. They are deprived of basic facilities and survival to life. They are fighting since time immemorial to recognize as human being and live in this universe with dignity. They are largely expelled and exiled citizen of India and people with no rights in practical and just surviving with food and nothing else (Webster,1990).

4.3. Discrimination Based on Skin Color

Discrimination based on skin color, or colorism, is a form of prejudice or discrimination in which human beings are treated differently based on the social meanings attached to skin color (Jones, 2001). Colorism, a term coined by Alice Walker in 1982, (Walker, 1983) is not a synonym of racism. "Race" depends on multiple factors (including ancestry); therefore, racial categorization does not solely rely on skin color. Skin color is only one mechanism used to assign individuals to a racial category, but race is the set of beliefs and assumptions assigned to that category. Racism is the dependence of social status on the social meaning attached to race; colorism is the dependence of social status on skin color alone. In order for a form of discrimination to be considered colorism, differential treatment must not result from racial categorization, but from the social values associated with skin color (Jones, 2001). Colorism can be found specifically in parts of Africa, Southeast Asia, East Asia, India, Latin America, and the United States. The abundance of colorism is a result of the global prevalence of "pigmentocracy," a term recently adopted by social scientists to describe societies in which wealth and social status are determined by skin color. Throughout the numerous pigmentocracies across the world, the lightest-skinned peoples have the highest social status, followed by the brown-skinned, and finally the black-skinned who are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. This form of prejudice often results in reduced opportunities for those who are discriminated against on the basis of skin color (Lynn, 2008). Regarding different skin color Almighty Allah says in verse in the Quran referring to why he created man in different colors. "And amongst his signs is the creation of heaven and the earth, and variation in your language and colors; verily, there are signs for those who know" (Al-Quran 30: 22)

4.4. Discrimination of the Basis of Nationality

Discrimination on the basis of nationality is usually included in employment laws. It is sometimes referred to as bound together with racial discrimination although it can be separate. It may vary from laws that stop refusals of hiring based on nationality, asking questions regarding origin, to prohibitions of firing, forced retirement, compensation and pay, etc., based on nationality. Discrimination on the basis of nationality may show as a "level of acceptance" in a sport or work team regarding new team members and employees who differ from the nationality of the majority of team members. In the UAE and other GCC states, for instance, nationality is not frequently given to residents and expatriates. In the workplace, preferential treatment is given to full citizens, even though many of them lack experience or motivation to do the job. State benefits are also generally available for citizens only. (Harvard Law School, 2015) In terms of visa issue, many countries citizens get visa easily to travel different countries in the world but for third world countries people or at present called developing countries citizens face lots of hassle to get visa in the time of traveling. Allah the almighty encouraged His best creation to travel in the different part of the world and to see the beauty and diversity of His creations. It will remind Him and makes Iman (faith) stronger on Allah. Allah the almighty says "Travel through the earth and see how Allah did originate creation; so will Allah produce a later creation: for Allah has power over all things" (Al-Qur'an-29:20). But human being makes traveling restricted and gave it privilege for certain citizen which is totally injustice.

4.5. Discrimination on the Basis of RACE

The Oxford English Dictionary defines racism as the “belief that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races” and the expression of such prejudice (Oxford University Press, 2011). Racism consists of both prejudice and discrimination based in social perceptions of biological differences between peoples. It often takes the form of social actions, practices or beliefs, or political systems that consider different races to be ranked as inherently superior or inferior to each other, based on presumed shared inheritable traits, abilities, or qualities. It may also hold that members of different races should be treated differently (Newman, 2012). The UN does not define “racism”; however, it does define “racial discrimination”: According to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the term “racial discrimination” shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life (UN International Convention, 1966). For example; when slavery was practiced in the United States, blacks were not only considered inferior to whites but regarded as property instead of human beings.

5. ANALYSES ON THE ISSUES FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES

The foundations of the social system of Islam rest on the belief that all human beings are equal and constitute one single fraternity. Allah the Almighty created a human pair to herald the beginning of the life of mankind on earth and all the persons inhabiting this world today have sprung from this pair. Because of the time passage the numbers of mankind gradually increased, their diversification and growth were divided into various tribes, and nationalities. Their languages became different; their modes of dress varied; and their manners of living also became distinct from one another. All these differences are said to be signs of Allah (Islambasic.com, 2015). They do exist in the world of reality. Hence, Islam recognizes them as matters of fact. It does not seek to wipe them out or to ignore them but affirms that their advantage consists in affording the only possible means of distinguishing one from the other. But the prejudices which have arisen among mankind out of these differences in the shape of groupings and organizations based on caste, color, race, language, nationality, etc., are disapproved by Islam. Islam regards all distinctions of birth, of high and low, upper and lower classes, on natives of the soil and aliens as the manifestation of their ignorance. It declares that all men and women in the world have sprung from the same parents and therefore, are equal in their status as human beings.

After propounding this concept of equality of mankind, Islam adds that if there can be any real difference between man and man it cannot be one of race, color, caste, country but one of their relationship with Allah. The most honored of people in the sight of Allah is the most righteous. Allah the Almighty says, “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)” (49:13). On the basis of this fundamental tenet, Islam seeks to build principled society as against the racial, national and parochial societies existing in the world. The basis of cooperative effort among men and women in such a society is not one’s birth but a creed a moral principle. Any one, if he believes in Allah as his Master and Lord and accepts the guidance of the prophets (the essence of which is embodied in Islam, the message of the last Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the

law of his life, can join this community, whether he is a resident of America or Africa whether he belongs to the Semitic race or the Aryan; whether he is black in color or white skinned; whether he speaks a European language or Arabic. All those who join this community will have the same rights and social status. They will not be subjected to any racial, national or class distinct of any kind. No one will be regarded as high or low. There will be no untouchable among them, nor could be polluted by the touch of anyone's hand. There will be no handicaps for them in the matter of marital relations, eating and drinking and social contacts. None will be looked down upon as lowly or mean by reason of his birth or profession. Nobody will claim any distinctive rights by virtue of his caste, community or ancestry. Man's merit will not depend on his family connections or riches, but only on whether he is better than others in moral conduct or excels others in piety and righteousness. Such a social order, out-stepping the geographical boundaries and limits of race, color and language as it does, can spread itself in all parts of the world and on its foundations can be raised the edifice of the universal brotherhood.

There is diversity among human beings. They have variety of genders, colors and languages and multiplicity of races and tribes. These diversities are considered natural and are called "His (Allah) signs" in the Qur'an (30:20-22). They are indicative of Allah's creative power and wisdom and are good and healthy since they endow human life with richness and beauty. Allah wants human beings to derive benefit from this diversity and not to allow it to generate unhealthy schisms and divisions in their ranks. Allah says in the Qur'an, "And from amongst His signs is that He created you from dust; and then behold you are humans scattered far and wide. Among His signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between you. Verily in that are signs for those who reflect. And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the variations in your languages and colors; verily in that are signs for those who know. And among His signs is the sleep that you take by night and by day, and the quest that you make for livelihood out of His bounty; verily in that are signs for those who hearken (30:20-23). In the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 16 (1) describes that men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. Finally this analysis we can draw a comments that Islam treat all the humankind equally which is also the demand of UN Universal Declarations of Human Rights.

6. FINDINGS

The following aspects are found from the study:

- a. Discrimination is going on in different forms in the different societies.
- b. All the discriminations have been created by humankind.
- c. Most of the states have laws against discrimination but it is not working because states itself and policymakers make discriminations in the society.
- d. This is not only in the non-Muslim countries but also in the Muslim countries.
- e. Awareness of discrimination is increasing but it is not enough for the great world.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In this short paper it appears that in different ways human kinds are most unjustly discriminated in the society. It is introducing different ways in our modern world and it is human created. Islam does not permit any kind of discrimination among the humankind. Different organization from the local and international level as well as government media and educational institutions can play a vital in reducing these kinds of discrimination from the society. If we can ensure social equality by reducing discrimination on the basis of race, color, caste and nationality that will bring peace,

stability and development in the society as well as in the world. Moreover, people can leave harmoniously in the beautiful planet. United Nations declaration on Universal Human Rights will be established as well as Islamic brotherhood and equality concept will be rewarded.

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