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Love Jihad against Love and the 'Kiss of Love' Craze among Youth

'Love Jihad' is among the popular phrases of our times. Along with this phrase has come up another phrase 'kiss of love', although it has not received that recognition which 'love jihad' has received. Both these phrases were first used in South India and have their own history.

Let's discuss about 'Love Jihad' first

No one knows where the 'Love Jihad' phrase originated from, but 6-7 years back it was first heard in Kerala. For years, it remained within the boundary of Kerala and Karnataka. About 2-3 years back it spread with great velocity to other parts of the country. In western Uttar Pradesh, it gave rise to violence in Muzzafarnagar. It got much space in the media too.

Do give attention to how the phrase has been framed. Love Jihad is a phrase having two words, one in English and another in Arabic. Why both the words are not in English or in Arabic is something that we need to think about. At the first thought it appears that Love Jihad is a drive/campaign for love. Meaning this drive believes in "long live love" (mohabbat zindabaad).

Love meaning pyaar or mohabbat in Hindi. But the English word Love has a different connotation and is associated with western values, which is said to be against Indian culture. Hence the word Jihad has also been used consciously. The image of a jihadi comes to mind when we hear the word jihad. The picture is not affirmative. Now if we look at the phrase 'love jihad' from this perspective, then it would mean terror of love. Considering this, 'Love Jihad' is a phrase used to create negative emotions.

However, it is better to find its meaning based on the view of those who use it more often. It would not be wrong to say that these words were framed by them.

There is an organisation named Hindu Jagriti Samiti. Much of its resources is focused on Love Jihad and hence their opinion can be considered as very important. According to the Samiti, Jihadis have declared a war against Hindus and Christians, which is called Love Jihad. "Today the demand of the time is Hindus be very careful so that Hindu women do not be a prey of the shaitan called Love Jihad. Come together against the conspiracy of Love Jihad. Protect the Hindu girls and save the cultural heritage of the country," it exhorts.

In Panchajanya, the mouthpiece of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, there has been much debate on Love Jihad. According to a writeup in Panchajanya, the main target of Love Jihad is organisations like Jaish-e-Mohammad from across the border and SIMI from inside the country who are preparing/training Muslim boys on how to convert Hindu girls into Muslims. Their aim is to make Hindu girls fall in love with them and marry them and then change their religion.

The Hindu Jagriti Samiti has also published a book on it. The book is available in Hindi, Marathi, Kannada, Gujarati, Odiya and Telugu languages. They claim that they are saving girls who are victims of Love Jihad and converting them back into Hinduism. According to the Samiti, the aim of Love Jihad is:

- Convert Hindu girls into Muslims and destroy the Hindu ancestry
- To produce many children from wedlock with a Hindu girl and thus increase the Muslim population
- To use the Hindu girls in Jihadi activities and arms smuggling after marriage
- To produce many children after marriage and then use them in suicidal terror attacks
- And lastly, to convert the entire world populace into Muslims

Certain things are clear from this.

- The Samiti believes that Love Jihad is a well-planned conspiracy of Muslims and Islam.
- That Muslim boys are trained for this purpose.
- That it is part of an international conspiracy.
- That fatwas are being issued against Muslims for the purpose.
- And that it is a conspiracy to convert the entire world to Islam.

Organisations making such claims are mostly believers of Hinduism and some Catholic organisations of Kerala. In Kerala, along with Love Jihad it is also known as Romeo Jihad.

Is it actually so?

In 2009 in Karnataka, a Hindu girl Silja Raj and a Muslim boy Ashgar met for the first time and thereafter kept meeting each other quite often. They started liking each other and wanted to live together. Silja told her father about her love interest but her father opposed it. One fine day they fled. Silja's father tried his best to bring back his daughter. According to an investigation by the Indian Express, within a few months their marriage became a big issue. The issue came to be known as a Love Jihad conspiracy. The girl's father filed a case in the High Court to bring his daughter back home. His allegation was that his daughter had become a victim of Love Jihad. At the time the BJP was in power in Karnataka and the case was being fought in the court by a lawyer close to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. When there was much noise about the Love Jihad conspiracy, the High Court ordered a CID probe into the matter. The CID investigated 21,890 cases of missing girls between 2005 and 2009. The CID found that of this, 229 girls married boys from a different religion and of that only 63 of them had converted. Of the 229 girls, 149 Hindu girls were married to Muslim boys; 10 Hindu girls were married to Christians; 38 Muslim girls were married to Hindu boys; 20 Christian girls were married to Hindu boys; one Muslim girl was married to a Christian girl; and 11 Christian girls were married to Muslim girls.

This meant girls from all religions chose partners on their own. Though their numbers may have differed, these were girls from all communities.

On investigation, the CID reached the conclusion that Silja and Ashgar's wedding was not a result of Love Jihad. The CID had clearly

stated in its December 2009 report presented in the High Court that neither any individual nor any organisation was involved in any kind of conspiracy against Hindu and Christian girls by convincing them to marry Muslim boys and converting them to Islam. About two years back, the Karnataka High Court closed the investigation on Love Jihad. It is clear from the CID investigation that there is no ground in the charges made by organisations like Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, Hindu Jagaran Vedike and Sri Ram Sena. After this, the issue subsided in the state but spread to other areas.

This is the reality behind the Love Jihad conspiracy in Karnataka. It is the same elsewhere too.

The truth of the conspiracy was seen in another form.

Some time back Cobrapost and Gulail conducted a long and secret investigation to find the truth behind Love Jihad in Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka. They tried to find out what is Love Jihad from leaders of organisations like RSS, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), etc. who had raised the issue. Conversations with these leaders were captured in the camera. They called it Operation Juliet and it was found from the investigation that their views were completely opposite to what Hindutva organisations claimed.

According to Cobrapost and Gulail:

- In the name of Love Jihad, RSS, BJP and VHP are trying to separate Hindu-Muslim couples.
- They forcefully 'save' the so-called Love Jihad victims.
- By misusing the support of the masses and putting pressure on the police and local administration, they try to break these marriages.
- The Hindutva organisations file false cases of rape and kidnapping against Muslims youth who have fled with Hindu girls or have married them.
- To trap the Muslim youth, forged certificates are used to show that the girls are minors.
- If a Hindu woman does not agree to give a statement against her lover or husband or to separate from him, she is blackmailed emotionally and other methods are used on her.
- The girls they claim they have saved have never ever asked for any help from these organisations or been a victim of Love Jihad.

From this investigation much of the truth behind Love Jihad came to the fore. To a large extent it was found who actually is behind this conspiracy. In fact, it is an expedient being used politically to create hatred and infighting among two communities. The riot in Muzzafarnagar is the biggest example.

From the allegations made by the Hindutva organisations talking of Love Jihad, some more important issues have emerged.

In our patriarchal society, women are considered the carrier of our culture and tradition. In our society, under the veil of supremacy, there is much hatred among a section of people. This section believes in and states that certain religions are alien and the people of those religions are enemies. If any girl falls in love with a boy from a different religion, an 'enemy' religion, or runs away with him, then this section believes that the culture and tradition of their community is in danger or has become polluted. It is also seen as the defeat of the individual and community, and a challenge to masculinity.

Not only this, men feel that a woman in all her avatars-mother, sister, daughter, wife-should be under their control. Behind this is the feeling that how can a woman take decisions on her own as a human being. So if a girl takes a decision about her life partner, then several dimensions are associated with it in order to oppose it.

This noise is also created against inter-religious marriages or love marriages or the freedom of choosing one's own partner. The entire drive of the conspiracy of Love Jihad lies on a girl's right to choose her own life partner. If they choose their partner from another religion, it is not acceptable to many.

This issue is also associated with the belief that a family or society's reputation lies with the reputation of its girls. If the girls choose their own partner, then the reputation of their family and the society they belong to is at stake, and when their partner is of a different religion then along with the reputation of the family and society, religion also gets associated with it. A consolidation is made against the girl's choice. There is violence and voices are raised against her choice, this is also done to scare those who use their liberty to choose. After Muzzaffarnagar, such consolidation, noise and violence was seen in Meerut too. Considering this, Love Jihad is against the law and Constitution.

Now let's discuss a bit about 'Kiss of Love' too. The thought behind 'Kiss of Love' is completely different from Love Jihad. It started in Kochi, Kerala, against the surveillance and restrictions put in public on girls and boys meeting each other. Soon the movement spread to Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Chennai. Kiss of Love is basically a campaign opposing these restrictions.

In the last few years, several incidents took place in Kerala where there were attacks on boys and girls sitting together or roaming around in public places, and also on couples or single girls having fun on the beach. Many a time the police too created problem for the girls and boys and arrested them. While some youngsters got injured in the attacks, other seven succumbed to their injuries.

Such incidents are the background to the inception of the campaign Kiss of Love. In 2014, a report was broadcast in a local channel in Kerala stating that some girls and boys were involved in immoral activities in the parking lot of a cafe. Following this, workers of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) manhandled people and caused destruction in the cafe. To oppose this, some youth in Kochi announced Kiss Day and opened a Facebook page on Kiss of Love. Very soon this page became popular and on November 2, 2014, several youth gathered at the marine drive in Kochi and expressed their anger against the restrictions put on love. The opposition was non-violent. Organisations like Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal, Hindu Sena, VHP, BJYM also came out on the streets against the campaign Kiss of Love. In opposition, in Kozikhode 'Kiss in the Street' was organised. Students of several universities in Delhi held a demonstration in front of the RSS office opposing moral policing and restrictions on love.

Organisations preaching morality and opposing the 'Kiss of love' claim that young boys and girls moving around together and kissing each other in public to express their love is a result of western influence. "It is immoral and against Indian culture. Because of this, our Indian culture is getting polluted," they say.

Whether you agree with 'Kiss of Love' or not, one thing has to be kept in mind. People opposing it are against youth falling in love. It has originated from the same idea from which Love Jihad has originated. But it is against the independence of girls, their movement and their choice. It is against freedom and choice.

All kinds of moral policing is done in the name of pornography under Section 294 of the Indian Penal Code. However, the law is not clear what pornography is. Every individual has his or her own definition of pornography. People preaching morality take advantage of this. It is important here to remember a 2009 judgement of the Delhi High Court. The court had said in its verdict that kissing does not come under the purview of pornography.

Both Love Jihad and Kiss of Love are associated with the lives of youth. While on the one hand Love Jihad is a drive to control their life, Kiss of Love is a voice for freedom from those restrictions. The basis of one is hatred and of the other it is love. One is against the spirit of the Constitution and the other is the restlessness to use the rights guaranteed under the Constitution.

The entire campaign of Love Jihad is an example of the creation of patriarchal Hindutva masculinity. This masculinity spreads hatred and at times becomes violent against women of its own caste and religion. It creates a collective mentality of violent masculinity against other castes and religions. It creates a 'violent man'. If the conspiracy behind Love Jihad is not brought out, it will divide society. The conspiracy is against a person's right to choose his/her partner. It is against the right to equality of men and women. It stands against that masculinity which advocates for equality and non-violence.

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Publication: 2015
 Layout & Design: CHSJ Creative Communication
 Financial Support: UNFPA
 Translation: Sucheta Das Mohapatra
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