

Conclusion

After going through the whole thesis, and on my personal experiences in France, I would like to conclude that the debate is between West vs Islam. For the West, Muslim world is the worst and the source of all problems and sorrows¹. The roots of the problems faced by French Muslim women lies in the deleterious attitude of the West towards Islam. West has made a propaganda that Muslim women are oppressed. They needed to be saved. West has used almost all means of communications and mass media in propagating negative image of Islam.

There are reports published by the CCIF, anti-Muslim physical attacks were increased by 500% while verbal abuse were 100% more in the first six months of the year 2015. Women have always faced maximum numbers of attacks (physical or verbal) and discrimination. As might be expected, 75% of the people who are physically and verbally attacked are women and 25% are men.²

French media have been part of the problem of rising Islamophobia for decades. As in other Western countries, French Muslims are traditionally portrayed as a foreign entity even when it comes to third- and fourth-generation French citizens. The young generation of Muslims in France is facing discrimination at different levels.

The radical right-wing groups are rising in Europe. They act in parallel with the manipulations formed especially by media against Muslim women, which is not in accordance with any ethics or law. There are also arguments that this systematic discrimination, which is carried out by the French government leading to the isolation of Muslim women from all social spheres of economy, politics, arts and education, is actually the product of the justified reasons of France. The most well-known of these arguments is that Islam is a fundamentalist religion, and the women belonging to it are tormented and therefore, need to be liberated. Muslim women need to be rescued from Islam which is an oppressive and a violent religion that puts the woman in the second

¹ "İslamofobinin Anatomisi: Fantazma, Korku, Nefret." Timetürk. Accessed December 11, 2018.

<https://www.timeturk.com/tr/makale/ibrahim-kalin/islamofobinin-anatomisi-fantazma-korku-nefret.html>.

² Olivier Esteves, "Islamofobia in France National Report 2015", (ed.) Enes Bayraklı, Farid Hafez, European Islamofobia Report 2015, 2016, *SETA*, pp.161-162.

plan. Similarly, the veil is a practice that alienates and marginalizes the women. According to this perspective, Muslim women who struggle to make their voice heard in France just to be able to live in accordance with their beliefs and culture are regarded as a marginal group which does not reflect the attitude of the majority of Muslim women.

Now, one should analyse the other situation i.e. of Muslims especially women. These women have their own identity, which they wish to preserve. Every individual on earth is unique, and this uniqueness intrinsically brings about differences. The variances are also the richness of mankind which must be preserved. These women are Muslims by faith and are trying to preserve their Muslim-French identity. Contrary to their efforts, French government by passing laws against veil and burqa are attempting to harm this identity. Muslim women have their own understanding of culture and religion. They wish to express themselves in their own way. These '*Muslimah*' of France have firm faith in their religion as well as in the constitution of the land.

For French authorities, the visibility of religious symbols at public places contradicts French laws of secularism. The freedom of the Muslim women from the headscarves will ease their assimilation. In this way the values of the Republic will be preserved. Contrary to the said law of secularism, the elements of the Christian faith such as Christmas, Easter, etc. publicly perform in many places, including schools, shows. Are such religious restrictions only for Muslims? Of course no, because Sikhs are also not allowed pugs in the public run schools. So, are such discriminations limited to the non-Europeans? Again the answer is no. Because, Jews in most of the cases are not allowed to wear 'kippah'. Majority of the practicing Jews have enrolled their children to the Jewish Private Schools. In other words, the laws are majorly affecting minorities whether Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus or Jews. But, the worst case is of Muslims because of the immorally connecting terrorism with Islam by the Western media.

In other words, this mechanism has been developed against Islam as the second largest religion after Christianity. This is an obvious outcome of the French intolerance and prejudice against Islam. On the other hand, when one looks at the attitude of French media towards the issues of French Muslim women, whether it be the headscarf ban, attacks on

them or discrimination, it comes to light that these women are the most affected section. They are severely unnoticed. Instead of Muslim women's statements, those of men and politicians regarding the headscarf issue have much more in print as well as electronic media. French authorities, media, NGOs and other agencies are in favour of the ban. Many a times, one can easily feel the colonial mind-set coated with secularism behind the ban. Because for French authorities, media and NGOs the Muslim women of France, who wish to veil are not aware of the fact that covering themselves too much is their exploitation. This so-called liberation effort, which is practiced in defiance of the Muslim women, is a product of the struggle of the superior white race to civilize and modernize other races. According to the Western scholar Maurice Barbier

“Secularism once seemed to be definitively established and universally accepted, but it has emerged markedly transformed from the debate over it in the last fifteen years. In fact, very distinct conceptions of it are proposed, which sometimes entail different, even opposed, consequences. People interpret it as they see fit, according to their situation, needs or desires. They differ on the way in which it should be applied in certain concrete situations. Specialists themselves have different visions of it, which does not prevent them from extending its meaning significantly. The mass of studies devoted to it (dozens of books and hundreds of articles) actually ends up obscuring the idea, rather than clarifying it. In short, secularism is no longer a simple and clear idea, easy to understand and apply. It has become a fluid, flexible notion, whose content can be extended and which can be variously interpreted. It thus risks being modified, altered, or even distorted. Under the guise of rethinking and renovating it, it can be weakened, twisted, unconsciously forgotten, or cleverly hollowed out. That is why it is important to ponder its exact nature and propose a precise definition of it, indicating the practical consequences that follow. Constitution, which prescribes the organization of ‘free and

secular state education' at all levels, which implies the exclusion of religious instruction; and in the 1958 Constitution, which, like that of 1946, asserts that France is a 'secular republic' (*république laïque*), excluding religion from the state. Thus, not only do the official texts not contain the word *laïcité*, but they use the word *laïque* in different senses, indicated by the context. However, each of the three cases involves excluding religion (or its representatives) from the public sphere (the state or schools). This dimension of exclusion risks being forgotten in an age which insists instead on integration. In fact, secularism has a negative character, whereas it is usually its positive aspect that is emphasized. In the second place, the secular character of the Republic, asserted by the 1958 Constitution, is nowhere defined and is clarified only by the parliamentary debates that led to its introduction into the 1946 Constitution. These debates reveal at least two different conceptions of secularism. For some, it is defined by the separation of church and state effected by the law of 1905; for others, it consists in the state's neutrality towards religions, which entails its respect for religious freedom. Apparently, there is no substantial difference between these two conceptions of secularism, which coexisted without clashing during the debates in 1946. Yet they are not identical and the difference between them will emerge later. The 1958 Constitution seems to privilege the second conception, for its first article asserts that France 'respects all beliefs' a formula added at the last minute which passed unnoticed (doubtless to reassure Catholics). In these conditions, constitutional secularism could be defined as state neutrality in religious matters, which would confirm the negative character of secularism.

But the 1905 law, which does not explicitly refer to secularism, suggests a different conception of it by effecting the separation of

church and state. Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, this expression, which does not figure in the text of the law but only in its title, lacks clarity. In fact, such separation boils down to two precise components, which are negative: the absence of recognition of forms of worship and the absence of their public funding in the form of salaries or subventions. It thus consists solely in putting an end to the regime of recognized forms of worship established by the 1801 Concordat and the organic articles of 1802. But several articles in the 1905 law, notably those concerning religious associations and the fate of religious buildings, indicate that the state unconsciously interferes in the religious sphere and improperly limits freedom of worship. They are therefore in conflict with a complete separation”.³

In this way with the proper understanding of the law by the Muslims of France would be a significant tool in support of their rights. Since the Constitution is superior to laws, we might be tempted to give precedence to secularism-as-neutrality over secularism-as-separation and even to substitute the former for the latter. Of course, this is perfectly possible, as long as we do not forget that there are two sorts of neutrality. Neutrality-as-exclusion corresponds to secularism-as-separation, defined as the non-recognition and non-subvention of forms of worship. It even refers, more broadly, to the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. As for neutrality as impartiality, it too involves excluding religion from the state, for the latter cannot be impartial if it itself has a religious character. But it does not prevent the state from having relations with religions – for example, recognizing and funding them. Consequently, constitutional secularism, defined as neutrality in both senses of the term, obviously encompasses legislative secularism. But it is broader (or more flexible), for it only obliges the state to be impartial in its relations with religions. There is therefore no point seeking to replace legislative secularism by constitutional secularism, since the latter necessarily includes the former. However, the

³ <file:///C:/Users/TAZEEM%20HAIDER/Downloads/French%20law%20ka%20band.pdf>

second is different from the first and goes beyond it, allowing the state to have equal relations with religions.

The role of Christianity in the history of Europe is obviously very important, but reference to it has no place in a political constitution which is, in reality, a constitutional treaty between states. Recent transformations in the state obviously have a marked impact on ways of conceiving and applying secularism. The current debate over the latter must take account of this determinant factor. The fact that the state has been undermined and that the public sphere has become fluid means great uncertainty for secularism; preserving it presupposes a precise and firm definition of the domain of the state.

Also, at this point they need to understand the Universal message of Islam. They should realize that they are the mere creature of Allah and should come forward with the universality in the message of Quran.

Recommendations:

Proper Understanding of the Holy Text: The message of Quran is universal in nature. It contains message for people of all ages, lands and times. The message of the holy book is significant not only for Muslims but for the whole humankind. It's essential understand the real message, delivered in Quran by none other than, but Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala. Muslims of the West should comprehend this message and make their co-citizens to realize the utility of the Quranic message for them. To comprehend the universality of the message one should understand the universe and the man, as described in Quran. In the holy book of Muslims i.e. Quran, Allah has stated clearly how he created substances on earth and in the cosmos. The Quranic concept of the universe was attested by the astronomers in the later centuries, which was contrary to the Western (Christian) believes. Western people should also understand these cosmic realities narrated in Quran almost 14 centuries ago and accept the reality that Islam is not contrary to progress or development. Instead of Islam, it was church, the greatest opponent of the freedom of thought. Muslims should convey the scientific realities of the Quran and let people accept them.

Quran has discussed the creation of this universe in an age when there was either no concept or was very little information about the cosmos. The Bedouin tribes used to think

that world is limited to certain territories or boundaries. Their thoughts were restricted to the idols they worship. They were the maker of those idols and the concept of an ultimate creator who created and initiated this universe was far beyond their intellect. In such dark ages Quran enlightened them with the cosmic realities. They were given the message enclosed with the creation of cosmos and their expansion.

“And the heavens We constructed with strength, and indeed, We are (its) expander.”ⁱ

The expansion of universe is at the present a scientific reality and has been affirmed by the scienceⁱⁱ. People were given this message in the language which they could easily comprehend. The instances were given from their proverbial substance. The message and information Quran contains was significant for all ages.

“Then He directed Himself to the heavens while it was smoke and said to it and to the earth, “Come (into being), willingly or by compulsion. They said, “We have come willingly”.ⁱⁱⁱ

The levels of skies are discussed in Quran. Almost 1400 years back, when there were no observatories, Quran confab about different skies. With the advancement of space science the facts have been established that there is not a single sky. There are numerous galaxies and this earth is just a part of it.

“Do you not consider how Allah has created seven heavens (skies) in layers?”^{iv}

In this way Quran established the universal scientific facts. Human beings were also informed that the sky which is seen from the earth is the lowest level of sky. “And He completed them as seven heavens within two days and inspired (i.e. made known) in each heaven its command. And we adorned the nearest heaven with lamps (i.e. stars for beauty) and as protection. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing. We have decorated the lowest heavens with lanterns”^v. This verse of Quran illustrates well about the galaxies and stars. The purpose of the lowest sky is also mentioned. Scientific advancements have proved that there lies the ozone layer which is a kind of protector for all the creatures from the harmful rays originating from the sun. It attests that all the details Quran contains about the creation of Universe and its realities are vital and are explicable. As, there are negative sentiments against Muslims and Islam in the western soils, the

universal message of Quran, if elaborated them properly would help in making an atmosphere of co-operation, mutual understanding and respect for all faiths including Islam.

The universal brotherhood delivered in the message of Quran should also be realised, followed and observed by both Muslims and Non-Muslims of France. As, the majority of this country is Christian, the concept of the ‘ahl-e-kitab’ (people of the book) should be conveyed in the best manner. With such messages, in France, Majority- minority relations (Christian-Muslim) relations and minority-minority relations (Muslims-Jews) relations would become healthier. The purpose of the message is to guide people, make them aware about good and evil, so that they could live peacefully on this earth and here after. For living peacefully on this earth Quran has always encouraged man to be aware of the worlds and all the advancements which are taking place over here. It has encouraged man to think and acquire knowledge in the words of Quran,

“And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed the hearing, the sight and the heart-about all those (one) will be questioned”^{vi4}

This verse at one hand warns people of talking without knowing the particular thing and on the other hand encourages people to attain knowledge.

Quran contains the universal message for human beings. The creation of Universe, man, and its purpose is well discussed in Quran. All human beings are part of a larger human community. This community is universal in nature, and the message for humanity is also complete and wide reaching. People are directed and commanded in the best way. Allah had send prophets for all lands and people; each and every community is guided by them. Islam discourages discrimination on the basis of colour, caste or creed because all are human being and are equal in respect to their physical appearances. It only distinguishes people on behalf of their deeds. They are believers or non-believers, good doers or evil doers. They are either guided or mislead. All human beings can find guidance from Quran, as it contains guidance for all. It is not restricted to a specific religion, caste, community or region. It has best guidance for the children of Adam, i.e. for the whole mankind. To

⁴ Al Quran, (17:36)

make message more comprehensible there are instances from different creatures. Even, honey bee, house bee and mosquitoes have been discussed in Quran. The purpose of such discussions is to urge people to apply senses and take lessons from them. As, discussed above, the purpose of Quran is guidance, and this purpose has been fulfilled in the most familiar way. Since its revelation, Quran has always attracted the attention of intellectuals, that is the reason it has been translated in almost all the world languages and numerous commentaries have been written with the purpose of explaining the message it contains. Still there is open invitation from Quran to think and acquire knowledge to all and the endless process of familiarization, acquaintance and understanding of the divine message of Quran is on the way of progress.

On the other hand the presence of Muslims and their religious practices have become a contentious issue in Europe. The non-Muslim community perceives them as a threat. Their growing presence has strained this relationship further. Increased terrorist action by a certain group of Muslim terrorists seems to have reaffirmed these perceptions. The entire Muslim community has become a target. They are held responsible for all the problems existing within this continent. European Muslims react to these allegations by isolating themselves from the rest of society. This mutual wariness has fractured the multicultural atmosphere of Europe. Academicians and intellectuals across the globe are addressing this issue of mistrust within a society.

I would like to ink down the ‘dar-al-dawa’ and ‘dar-al-ahad’ concept of notable Islamic scholar Faisal al-Mawlawi. He was the deputy chairman of European Council for Fatwa and Research, and famous for his work in Islamic Studies. Mawlawi, compared the contemporary Europe with the Mecca before the ‘hijra’ (migration) of Prophet Mohammad (SAWW). As, during those days, Prophet Mohammad (SAWW) declared his Prophet-hood, at that time Muslims were few in Mecca. The early converts to Islam, the first Muslims along with Prophet Mohammad (SAWW) proved themselves ‘best human beings’ with their good conducts, morals and characters. After the declaration of Prophet-hood, Hazrat Mohammad (SAWW) stayed for 13 more years in Mecca. Prophet along his companions faced all types of hardships. They never harmed anybody. Then they faced the social refuse for almost 3 years and remained in the valley of Abu Talib. According

to Faisal al-Mawlawi, the situation in Europe could never be worse than the those of Meccan period of Prophet. European Muslims should take lessons from the Meccan life of Prophet Mohammad (SAWW). If, they see the hardships of the Prohpet and his companions in Mecca, then they will realise that the hardships against them are very few. It is their responsibility to convey the message of Islam by their good behaviour to their neighbours, co-workers, colleagues, teachers, friends and anybody they know.

When the Prophet went to Mecca in 10 AH to perform Hajj, he was denied. He had thousands companions with him. But he did not show rigidity and accepted all the conditions of the enemies. He treated each and every one very calmly and did not insist on performing the Hajj. He returned back to Madina and that year none of the Muslims including the Prophet himself performed Hajj.

This view of coexistence is absolutely essential in today's cosmopolitan Europe. Issues, which are directly related to religion, need their solutions keeping in mind the religious rulings regarding those problems. Problems related to culture need to be addressed according to culture and should not be mixed with issues related to religion.

The training of the 'ulema': is another need of the hour. An untrained, ignorant 'alim' is a threat to any civilized society, including the west. Their religious biases create mistrust and intolerance amongst the community. Many a times untrained 'ulema' mislead the Muslim masses and they misinterpret the basic texts of Islam. Tariq Ramadan is completely right, when he writes in his books to invest in the training of 'ulema'. It is beneficial because they could then lead the Muslim masses in the right direction. It will also help in bridging the gap between European Muslims and non- Muslims. Also the trained 'ulema' will help in creating an environment of harmony and co-operation amongst peoples of different faiths.

The remarks of scholar Carl W. Ernest help in understanding this point. According to Ernest:

“By “Islam” do we mean do we mean the scriptural definition of performing the basic ritual actions that denote submission to God

(profession of faith, ritual prayer, fasting in Ramadan, giving alms, and pilgrimage)? If so, should we restrict the term “Islam” to the level of minimum conformity with the expectations of a particular Muslim community? That would follow classical theologians such as Ghazali, who consider that membership in the Muslim community applies to anyone who prays toward Mecca (although in practice he took serious with philosophers and Shi’is over their theologies). But the problem with any authoritative definition of religion remains the same: Who is entitled to define Islam? In any society in the world today, religious pluralism is a sociological fact. If one group claims authority over all the rest, demanding their allegiance and submission, this will be experienced as the imposition of power through religious rhetoric”.⁵

Ernest expresses the view that religious authority should not be biased and one sided. Other groups belonging to Islam should be seen as equal partners in explaining and elaborating this religion.

It is important to develop a consensus among the European Muslims. There should be counselling at every stage. It should be done not only at the level of ‘ulama’ but with ordinary European Muslim citizens also. Young European Muslims should take part in all kind of activities, which are permitted in Islam. They must convey the true message of Islam and thus eradicate misconceptions present among non- Muslim Europeans. Western Muslim youth must become torchbearers. Youth organizations like Muslimische Jugend in Deutschland (MJD) / Muslim Youth in Germany are already playing a very important role in this direction.

“Founded in 1994 and has gained popularity in recent year especially among the very religious of young Muslims. The organisation has local groups (so called Lokalkreise) in many Germancities. On average, the

⁵ Carl W. Ernst, *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 205-206.

around 900 registered members are well educated and between 13 and 30 years old, but the organisation explicitly addresses all Muslims regardless of nationality and background. On their website, the MJD describe themselves as “multicultural”, “Islamic” and “hip”. Each year, around 1,000 young Muslims participate in the annual meeting, which offers a wide range of activities: A rap workshop, origami class and Quran reading as well as debates with representatives from Greenpeace (in 2008) or with a member of the Central Council of Jews (in 2009). The MJD is under observation of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, who accuse it of having personal and organisational links to the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood in Germany and Europe. For this reason, the Ministry of Family Affairs and Youth cut their funding towards the MJD in 2003. In the past years, the Muslim youth organisation has tried to regain the confidence for example by incorporating non-Islamic civil actors such as for interreligious dialogue”.⁶

In short, the situation of Muslim women in France who are exposed to a kind of second-class human treatment is worrisome. The French government’s policies play an important role in increasing verbal and physical attacks towards Islam and its members. These treatments are not peculiar to France though, France, as the motherland of the ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity, should lead the change in these constrictive policies. Since the world needs peace more than anytime now, which can only come through mutual understanding and tolerance.

⁶ "Euro-Islam: News and Analysis on Islam in Europe and North America." EuroIslam News and Analysis on Islam in Europe and North America. Accessed November 21, 2015. <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/germany/>.
