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Listen, Muslim Parent... (From India, on political Islam)

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Dear Muslim Parent,

SALAAMS! You cannot but be aware that these are troubling times for the ummah in India, across the globe, and especially in Muslim majority countries. What does Islam teach, what do Muslims want? That is the question the world seems to be asking. You could of course take the view, as many do, that the question itself reeks of prejudice against Muslims and their faith. So nothing further needs to be said. Or, you could begin by acknowledging that, as lived faith, there are many Islams. And that some of them present a very ugly picture of their faith.

What does the Gita teach? It depends on whether it is Mahatma Gandhi or Nathuram Godse addressing the question. So is the case with the Quran. It depends on whether you listen to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad or Osama bin Laden. So, do not get defensive.

Four young Muslim men from Kalyan, near Mumbai, fly off to Syria to join the jihad launched by the Islamic State. It is headed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, a man who proclaims himself caliph, directs crimes against humanity and perpetuates ethnic and religious cleansing. A maulana from UP with a considerable following swears allegiance to this monster. A group of 20 young Muslims from Tamil Nadu pose for photographs wearing specially ordered ISIS T-shirts and post them on Facebook.

One of the boys from Kalyan is already a "martyr". Meanwhile, messages in different Indian languages feeding the caliphate fantasy to Muslims are reportedly circulating on social media. Not be left behind, Al Qaeda, too, is set to open its own India chapter.

Not my son, he will never take to that path, you think. But the grieving and the anguished Muslim parents from Kalyan, too, never thought their sons would go that way. So Muslim Parent, think again. No need to panic. But it is important that you are aware of the Islam that is being taught in the madrassa, mosque or Islamic centre that your son frequents. Turn your home into a part-time study circle. Watch Dr Zakir Naik's Peace TV more closely. Notice how the channel has nothing to do with peace; it in fact preaches Muslim supremacy and the inferiority of others.

Among the many Islams you find in your midst, beware in particular of what are commonly referred to as political Islam and violent jihadism. Here in brief is what they are all about.

Political Islam (Wahhabism, Salafism, Ahl-e-Hadith, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind): These are the followers of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (Arabia; the theological anchor for the Saudi tribe that rules Saudi Arabia), Sayyid Qutb (Egypt; Muslim Brotherhood) and Maulana Abul A'la Maududi (India, Pakistan; Jamaat-e-Islami). The Afghan jihad against Soviet occupation in the 1980s provided the crucible for these currents to co-mingle, cross-fertilise. What unites them is the belief that it is the bounden duty of all Muslims to strive through "all means possible" to establish an Islamic State to enforce shariah laws.

Violent jihadism (Al Qaeda, Islamic State, Boko Haram and numerous jihadi outfits in Pakistan, Bangladesh and elsewhere): The outfits who take the political Islam ideology to its logical end. "All means possible", after all, is open to interpretation.

Beware if your son is attracted to the ideals of political Islam. Though it is not necessarily a conveyor belt to violent jihadism, the Islamic State fantasy lies on the same route that leads to brutal mass crimes in Islam's name. I am of course assuming that you, Muslim Parent, are yourself not sold to the ideals of political Islam. If that be the case, what can I say?

Javed Anand

P.S.

* The Week. Tuesday, September 16, 2014 14:40 hrs IST :

http://week.manoramaonline.com/cgi-bin/MMOnline.dll/portal/ep/theWeekContent.do?contentId=17571555&programId=1073755753&tabId=13&BV_ID=@@@&categoryId=-219961

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