

RACISM AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION

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Abstract

In essence, globalisation has brought together the nation-states and societies with more interaction among the masses. In a way, there has to be economic egalitarianism, social freedom and coexistence besides political democracy without discrimination of religion, caste, creed and colour. This is the essence of the UN Charter and subsequent global covenants for securing and protecting human rights. Unlike their paper existence, the practical trends are different at the global level. In last few decades, millions of human beings have suffered crimes against humanity based on racial discrimination, gender inequality, caste system and above all discrimination on religious basis. Racism is the state of approval that features and capabilities can be ascribed to people simply based on their caste, creed and racial grouping. Besides, it is an acceptance that, some races are superior to other races and so on. This powerful tool has been used since centuries for instilling the element of fear and hate for others during peace and war. This research aims to analyse the worldwide trends of racial discrimination as a challenge to the global governance system while analysing the myopic response from the international community. These evidences are evaluated in the light of religious texts paving way for a dialogue-based approach recommended to confront the realities of racism in our society.

Keywords: Racism, Globalisation, Global Governance, Prejudice, Racial Relations, Discrimination, Durban Declaration, Dialogue

Introduction

Subsequent to the formation of United Nations Organisations (UNO) in 1945, an emphasis was given to protecting the human beings by securing human rights. There was a new drive for the improvement of global governance system. This governance system was designed to ‘codify human rights in a universally recognised regime of treaties, institutions, and norms.’ Gradually a well-defined global governance system started taking roots and the nation states were stressed to encourage and guarantee human rights both at the domestic state level and internationally in collaboration with UN and other multilateral organisations, having international acknowledgment. However, there remained significant challenges in the promotion of human rights and other norms like freedom from racial discrimination, religious discrimination, slavery, torture, gender biases and right to basic education and health care.

The concept of racism is defined differently by different scholars and academics. Some believe that it is a notion and rational that explains a link between “inherited physical traits of personality, intellect or culture and combined with it, the notion that some races are inherently superior to others”.¹ While the term generally denotes bigotry,

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oppression, prejudice or discrimination based on religion, race, caste or creed, most logicians argue that racism is an effective tool of exploitation i.e. those who were amongst the ruling elites considered racialism a tool for the perpetuation of their power and subjugation of the weak.²

The origin of racism has been a highly debatable concept. While famous academicians such as Thomas Gosset, the author of *“Race: the History of an Idea in America”* considered it 5000 years old, others such as Ivan Hannaford contested this, claiming its origin from 18th and 19th centuries. The early example of racism was observed by analysts during the enslavement of Africans and trade of slaves by West in the New World, where African blacks were considered less human than European whites. This practice continued for centuries. With the exploration of Africa in 15th and 16th centuries by Dutch and Portuguese, the process of slavery increased.³ In subsequent years, African statehood was shattered, and its wealth was plundered by intruders, ultimately forcing them to act as slaves in various European countries through slave trade where they were considered as ‘species of savages’.

Jospeh-Arthur Comte de Gobineau delved deeper into this concept while researching on racism in the 19th century. In his comparison between the Aryan culture, Indo-European and Indo-Iranian, he placed significant importance to white race classifying it to be superior to the rest. In his research he explained that classifying human beings into races created natural barriers between them. However, when these races intermingle, the barrier is broken which also leads to a state of anarchy which he believed was prevalent in different historical timelines in Central Asia, Middle East and Sub-Continent. The formal use of the word “Racism” however, was known to be made in Germany in 1933 in a book entitled, “Racism” written by Mangus Hirschfeld afterward translated it into English language.

Distinct histories and cultural patterns have defined races over centuries. However, this concept has often been classified as “misunderstood, misused and a highly dangerous”.⁴ Most analysts have faced difficulty in categorising racism under a specific theoretical framework. While some contend it to have connection with Marxism, others argue that it could also be classified under constructivism. Till date, there is no consensus amongst researchers on a sound framework, as where to place racism in theory.

The Misunderstood Concept of Races

A class of racists believe the notion that human beings are naturally divided into various groups based on some deep-seated biologically hereditary characteristics, which otherwise are not shared by members of other races. In their opinion, these differences can be observed prominently in terms of the appearance of the groups. But this criterion does not seem to be the basis of actual racism. As by and large it has been experienced that racism is found even among the masses having the same corporeal appearance and same geographical region. In such cases racism finds its roots in caste, creed, ancestry and religion.

A prominent case in point was when the Japanese carried their prejudices while handling Koreans (both having identical appearances) during the occupational period. Another case is India, being one of the prominent economic players in the world, still carries the historical baggage of the caste system. It has four main castes; Brahmins; the intellectual class, Kshatriya; the warrior class, Vaishys; the agricultural and trade class and Shudras; the services or manual worker class. In India, these dominant castes have always committed unprecedented degradation of its lower classes and Dalits; a violation of fundamental human rights. Owing to the caste system, there take place systematic social violence and discrimination against lower classes, minorities and even women folk. Similarly, there is widespread forced prostitution, child abuse and female infanticide. Alongside, there is a prevalent inter-caste and communal violence; "religion-based violence against Muslims and Christians are recurring at an alarming frequency in India".⁵

Indian Government passed new Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB)-2019 in December 2019, purely based on discrimination. This is an amendment made in the Citizenship Act of 1955, which accommodated people from all communities, caste, creed and religions without any discrimination. The new amendment act is based on discrimination, where Muslims have been excluded from the Indian nationality. There have been serious reservations over the Indian Citizenship Amendment Act-2019 (CAA-2019), adopted by the Indian Parliament in 2019. The international community, the United Nations and the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) have expressed their reservations over this discriminatory act of the Indian Government. This act is especially meant for the Muslims and is highly provocative. This is contradictory to global practices and the UN Charter, where religion is made as criterion for the citizenship of any country. Indeed, it is a very dangerous move towards racism, which runs counter to human values and globalisation. Indian security forces have been involved in the killing of Muslims in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K) and lately illegally made it part of the Indian Union against the dictates of UNSC resolutions.⁶

Over the years, European and American researchers and even some philosophers had wrongly assumed that white-skinned people are superior to others. Similarly, several social and natural scientists have made scientific efforts to give prominence to their research by elevating one race over another. Yet, another class of scientists assumed that some races like blacks have inherent shortcomings as compared to others especially those belonging to European nations.⁷ However, with rapid advancements in the area of scientific research, invention of new methods, and enrichment in the vision of scholars, it has been established that those scientific assumptions and philosophical theories were ill-conceived.⁸

In the globalised world, there is hardly any difference between western white races and African blacks, thus both are considered same and equal. Nevertheless, racial discrimination still exists in many forms and formats in practical terms despite biological homogeneity and globalisation. In west and United States, blacks are still being looked inferior despite their huge presence and numerous contributions towards economic uplift

and development of Europe and America. United Nations however called for the end of all forms of racial discrimination which may be; any form of discrepancy, inclusion and exclusion or any form of restriction or inclination based on race, colour, creed, caste or place of origin. The racial discrimination also includes abolishing or harming recognition of any ethnic group or a race. Indeed, UN General Assembly passed a resolution in 1948 that reject any racial discrimination. UN reject all discrimination among human beings and asks for the safeguards of all human beings in the human rights and socio-political standings. Racism in essence has a multi-faceted dimension and its relation with gender, employment and media is one that is highly debatable in today's era.

Various Dimensions of Racism

There has been an increasing acceptance of the notion that racism affects women and men in varying grounds and in different ways. An increasing number of cases has revealed that women belonging to a specific race, religion or caste have faced multiple and varying forms of discrimination. The root cause of this is intrinsically related to patriarchal norms and social structures that reinforce these norms. Women have been the worst sufferers of racism and ethnic-based violence. During the Japanese occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945, Korean women were used as "comfort women" for the Japanese soldiers in the forward battle locations.⁹ Through an ordinance, the Koreans were even forced to change their names to Japanese names. Similarly, during the Balkans conflict, a significant number of women folks of Bosnia and Kosovo were put across the incidents of rape on racial basis. This was also the case in some of the conflict-prone African countries like Congo, Rwanda, Burundi etc.

In India, majority of the attempts made by women belonging to minority groups to attain justice through criminal justice system are forestalled. Gender biases also exist within institutions that make it increasingly difficult for female members of different castes to attain their social, political and economic rights. Furthermore, limited number of cases of caste-based exploitation reaches the courts for trial, particularly due to factors related to honour and shame, since it is conservative society. Ethnic conflict also produces internally displaced persons and refugees. In these cases, women are highly vulnerable to exploitation, sexual violence and access to basic services. A prominent case in this regard has been of Burundian women in refugee camps, residing in the United Republic of Tanzania who were constantly ridiculed and violated while they performed day-to-day tasks.¹⁰

Linking Job Opportunities with Racism

It is a generally accepted notion that fairness of employment is dependent on the equality offered by the organisation. This is manifested when organisations observe recruitment in a fair and just manner and hires people based purely on merit and not on race, religion or the origin. This is also aligned to International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No.111 concerning respect for employment and occupation, which reaffirms the principle of equal opportunity for all.¹¹ However unfair practices related to preferential treatment given to a particular race is still prevalent globally. In highly civilised societies

like United States, which advocates the principles of equal opportunities for all religions, races and castes have been confronted with the vicious cycle of discrimination, especially after the unfortunate incident of 9/11. A high number of racial minorities continue to be underrepresented in US as well as in wider European communities.

According to social scientist Kenneth Arrow, discrimination exists because certain employers view the relative productivity of workers based on subjective evaluation which is based solely on a stereotype of a particular race. Employers even at the present day and age while regard white workers to be more reliable than those belonging from minority groups. This vicious cycle of discrimination and barriers from people belonging from minority groups fosters depression amongst these groups and loss of self-confidence.

Usage of Media as an Instrument

In today's world media has assumed a unique status in perception building about any event, any community, race or religion. As observed in the past, media has acted as a powerful tool, which was utilised by those powerful groups and communities for promotion of discriminatory and racial narratives. Media is powerful tool to create fear and prejudice and create a strong sentiment of hate towards a particular race, caste, creed or religion. Often it has been noted that the media policy tends to contribute to a vision of social reality that is far from the truth and suppresses the real information regarding groups that become a target of racists. A case in point is that of immigrants fleeing the war in Middle East (Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Libya) to various parts of Europe and their discriminatory behaviour.

Indeed, those who waged war in Middle East for their own economic and strategic gains are now barring migrants to at least take temporary refuge in the safe regions of Europe and America, purely on racial and religious basis. While causing massive human rights violations and terror in these countries, the refugees are not allowed to enter the borders of Europe fearing terrorism. It was revealed that the Finnish media had a higher tendency to cover stories related to Russians and Estonians and their relationship with crime.¹² These groups are portrayed as a source of problem and characterised as unreliable, disloyal and criminals. This negative generalisation pollutes the minds of viewers who can get influenced by the news they watch on daily basis.

After the incident of 9/11, a report was published titled 'Summary Report on Islamophobia' highlighting the role of international media in building perceptions against Muslims and Islam. The report's findings indicated that certain media houses presented misconstrued perceptions about Muslims and Islam. Such misperceptions further contributed towards changing the attitudes of non-Muslims towards Muslims while stirring hatred. To counter such mindset, a national newspaper sought to provide a fair ground for a healthy debate. In some cases, media played a positive role by presenting the true picture of Islam and Muslims. Islamic scholars were also shown presenting the negative pictures of those who used Islam for their nefarious and undesired role of militancy.¹³

Role of Institutions: The Universal Vow for Human Rights

After the establishment of UNO in 1945, there developed an international thinking for securing human rights. In this regard, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' was adopted by UNGA on December 10, 1948. The wider message of this declaration was the protection of the rights of the people at the global level while discarding the exploitation and discrimination based on caste, creed, religion, colour or any other form of discrimination. Indeed, the contents of this declaration were drawn from the Last Address of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Through its contents, all member states are asked to publicise and disseminate the text of the Declaration without making any distinction or prejudice to the political status of countries or territories down to educational institutions at the global level.

This Declaration guarantees freedom, equality and dignity of all human beings in the wordings that; "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights".¹⁴ They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. The declaration denounces any sort of racial discrimination and considers everybody to be free having the privileges of all the rights outlined in this Declaration. There has been made no distinction of any kind like "race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status". In the same way "no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty".

In the similar lines, the declaration assures the safety of the basic human rights of every individual, societal clusters or political entities, the nation states at the level of international politics. Article-4 of the Declaration firmly prohibits slavery in all its forms and manifestations. Elaborating on the concept of slavery and its physical application, the proviso underlines that no human being shall be held in "slavery or servitude". The curse of slavery and the trade of slaves must be banned in all its forms. Unfortunately, the contents of this basic document on human safety and security have never been implemented in the true letter and spirit. Rather, the Declaration has been used for the subjugation of some countries or groups while endorsement of others, merely based on discrimination. This practice is continuing in this highly civilised world.

Racism Response: Challenges at the National Level

In 2016, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination met to discuss the implementation of provisions of the International Convention on elimination of all forms of racial discrimination in Pakistan. One of the key challenges that were noted by experts was the lack of recognition in Pakistan regarding racial discrimination and lack of data collection and statistics which prevent thorough assessment of the situation and remedial measures to combat racism in the country.

In Pakistan's context, there is limited research on racism and mostly has been dominated by narrative reviews. An anecdotal letter penned by a researcher titled:

“*Class, caste or race: Veils over Social Oppression in Pakistan*’ highlights the silence that the Pakistani society maintains over caste-based discrimination despite its prevalence in many parts of the country. In this account, the researcher maintains the challenges researchers face to conduct field work in this area and the different terminologies used to denote differences in attitudes towards different castes.

The most important element of effective research is the presence of disaggregated information. While efforts by the government have been made to collect population statistics and associated information such as birth/ death/ education/ housing/ health statistics, negligible efforts have been made to collect information related to ethnicity/ gender/ citizenship status. The Durban Programme of Action which endorses the need to gather disaggregated data collection also emphasises the need to collect this information with due consent of the people being selected and consistent with data protection policies.

Racism Response: Challenges at the Global Level

In 1963 the UN General Assembly adopted the "Declaration on Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination" to tackle racism in all its forms and manifestations. Building on this declaration, the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) was adopted on 21st December 1965.

To implement this convention a Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was established. This institutional mechanism was established to ensure compliance of the countries’ signatory to the convention to not only submit reports to the CERD outlining efforts made to tackle racial discrimination but also encourage governments to take action. The challenges faced by CERD however are two-fold. First, it neglects the gender-related aspects of racism and second, the sessions under CERD provide a limited window of opportunity for exchange between the civil society and non-governmental organisations, which involuntarily presents a myopic overview of the grassroots problems.

As an overdue notion, UNESCO has organised four World Conferences against Racism (WCAR) with a massive cleft amid these. The first ever conference was held in 1978, at Geneva, Switzerland,¹⁵ with the agenda of reaching solution of South African Apartheid racial segregation and discrimination. Subsequently the second conference was again held in Geneva in 1983.¹⁶

The third conference was held in Durban, South Africa, consented as "World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance" in 2001. The then Secretary General to the conference, Mary Robison, while emphasising the ways of contemporary racism that worry everyone, specifically emphasised the need to pay special attention to gender discrimination along with racism and recognised the double discrimination which can occur. The conference spanned over one week; from August 31 to September 7, 2001, with comprehensive deliberation on the agenda. Upon criticism of Israeli activities transforming into racism, the United States and Israel walked

out of the conference,¹⁷ and EU countries refused to censure the Israeli repression against innocent Palestinians once the Arab World made such a demand.

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted through consensus is a comprehensive document for addressing the concerns of racial discrimination, racism, xenophobia and other related acts of intolerance. It delineates measures to combat racism and advocated for stronger anti-discrimination legislation and administrative measures.¹⁸ At the end of the conference: 'Durban Declaration and Programme of Action' (DDPA) was also adopted. One of the key weaknesses of the conference was the absence of discussion towards sensitive issues such as the caste-based system existing in India, acts of racism towards Kurds, the Palestine-Israel issue, and Kashmir conflict.

In 2009, to track progress against commitments made in the Durban Conference, UN high commissioner for human rights in consultation with UN member states organised a conference to review commitments.¹⁹ The review conference held from April 20 to April 24, 2009, at Geneva and mostly reaffirmed the contents of Durban Declaration. Para-6 of section-1 of the 'Outcome Document of the Review Conference', "reaffirms that all peoples and individuals constitute one human family, rich in diversity, and that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights; and strongly rejects any doctrine of racial superiority along with theories which attempt to determine the existence of so-called distinct human races".²⁰

One of the key weaknesses of the conference was the lack of participation from leading global players such as the US, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, Sweden, Israel. During the conference, the walkout of forty western delegates during Iranian President Ahmadinejad speech against Israeli racial activities towards Palestinian highlighted lack of tolerance towards the racial atrocities.²¹ The result of intense opposition of the West towards addressing such issues resulted in the formulation of a biased final draft of the Durban Review Conference. In this version, the Israel-Palestinian issue was watered down.

Addressing Myopic Response towards Racism

Because of racial discrimination, the oppressed classes are seeking a system which gives them their basic rights to survive with equality, respect and dignity. The global treaties, agreements, and declarations on human rights and racial discrimination agreed upon through a range of conferences and conventions could not be implemented in their true letter and spirit, primarily because of the opinionated and high-status mendacity. The myopic treatment given to this thin-skinned issue of humanity by leading global powers has raised serious misgivings by the victim class and advocates of egalitarianism and justice in the world. Failure of all manmade systems to provide basic rights of survival to all those who have been mistreated through the years has made it imperative to formulate a dialogue platform that advocates the spirit of equality and is free from synthetic limits.

In this situation, the dialogue platform must be formulated to advocate the values of equality. Across various religions, the central theme involves emphasis on

humanity dignity and equality for all. In Islam, the Holy Qur'an spreads the message of humility and respect for diversity and is against all forms of racism. The noble Qur'an says: '*O people, we have created you male and female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most noble of you to Allah is the most righteous of you. Verily, Allah is knowing and aware.*'²² The Holy Prophet (PBUH), in his last address said, "All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a White has no superiority over a Black nor does a Black has any superiority over a White except by piety and good action."

Similarly, Sikhism emphasis on the principles of peaceful co-existence as their tradition states "*The Timeless One doesn't approve of separation or disruption; He doesn't recognize any distance; He believes only in love and appreciates selfless service...God resides in all; therefore, every individual is linked to the other by the ties of mutual cooperation and co-existence.* In Christianity, the teachings of the Bible guide racial healing, equality and peace. This was specifically stated in 2006 by a Mormon Church President addressing racism "[T]here is no basis for racial hatred among the priesthood of this Church. If any within the sound of my voice is inclined to indulge in this, then let him go before the Lord and ask for forgiveness and be no more involved in it".

In Buddhism, a clear message is provided to the followers stating that birth or social status does not define whether a person is good or bad. The only defining factor in Buddhism is their actions. The teachings of Buddhism denote that while animals become distinct due to their colour or appearance, the same standard does not apply to human beings. It states that if a human being is judged based on their appearance, then the person is reducing human beings and themselves to animals.

It can be deciphered that across all religions, the values of peace and equality and abhorrence of racism are inherent. Dialogue to counter the narrow and myopic mindset towards racism would be in the form of a conversation between different groups or individuals to improve mutual understanding and engage positively. This type of dialogue is different from a debate where the aim is to win an argument or convince others to accept one's viewpoint.

Way Forward

Despite repeated denials, the global governance system is still based on racial discrimination. Racial discrimination incidents occur in the United States, Europe, India and many parts of the world. These repeated incidents in a civilised world and continued acts of racial discrimination call for a broader approach to address the trends of racism. Despite various conferences and dialogues that have been conducted to ameliorate tensions between the countries and come up with a solution-oriented approach towards racism, these avenues have remained counter-productive.

From a theoretical perspective, social constructivism assists in analysing the institutionalised interaction through dialogue conducted on an international level through conferences and inter-faith dialogues. Constructivists such as Alistair John assert

that these dialogue forums assist in facilitating the international socialisation process as they provide a conducive environment for intense interaction amongst agents on specific issues. Constructivists assert the significant role of dialogue forums in enhancing trust and confidence-building between governments.²³ In the initial phase of an international agreement, trust is weak between the two states, but this can only be strengthened if there is an increase in the exchange of reliable information and enhanced acceptance of the other parties' stance during mutual agreements. The constructivist perspective is that these forums are influential in overcoming negative images of one's counterparts. Tumos Forsberg articulates that establishing trust is through a process of inter-subjective communication.

Similar to the constructivist approach, are the theories of '*epistemic communities*'. These are networks of experts who have specialised knowledge regarding specific areas or particular domains. Due to their expert knowledge, they can share conversational practices, normative and casual beliefs and configurations of thinking. These communities can lead to the establishment of everlasting connections between actors in different countries due to their shared policy ideas and have a considerable influence on the way policy-makers view racism.

To address this problem, future dialogue through a network of epistemic communities built through institutional mechanisms i.e., conferences/ seminars/ workshops etc. Such an effort should be action-oriented and mitigate the challenges of racial discrimination in the broader social set-up. An optimistic approach will lead us to address this universal challenge with more flexibility and optimism. There has to be a shared concern for addressing the issues of racism and racial discrimination. The theoretical aspects of racial discrimination have to be put into action in the subsequent phase. In this regard, there has to be an institutional approach which encompasses broad-based strategy of reconciliations and cultural exchanges among people from various cultures and civilisations. Words and dialogue must be reinforced by actions and physical promotion. Islam provides an excellent recipe to end all forms of racial and cultural discrimination. Dialogue on racism must be based on the following recommendations:

- Firstly, the dialogue must be conducted within a framework of equivalence not considering a specific race inferior to the other and is not biased by personal sentiments.
- Secondly, the discussions and negotiations must be conducted under a meta-religious context identifying commonalities between religions on the issue of racial discrimination.
- Thirdly, the dialogue must be conducted in the spirit of being respectful to the different opinions of the participants on the issue of racism and chalk out a common approach to tackle the issue of racism.
- Fourthly the dialogue must encourage peaceful co-existence and encourage candid discussion between the participants.
- Lastly, the dialogue should encourage opportunities of research in this area which lacks an evidence base to inform decision making.

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