

This is in response to the controversy over singing of *Vande Matram* by Muslims. As a Muslim, I have no hesitation in saying, I love the song *Vande Matram*. It moves me more than our national anthem, *Jana Gana Mana*. It is very poetic and a literary masterpiece. The imagery is beautiful and inspiring.

I have had fights (yes, boxing and free-style *kushti*) with many Muslims over this song. When they call it un-Islamic, I say: "So is Iqbal's poem *Naya Shivala* in which he urges us to create a lovely *moorti* (idol) and inscribe the word 'Hindustaan' on its forehead, instal it in the Haridwaar of our hearts, take water from the Ganga of our eyes and let it flow before this idol, our Motherland and let us forget all other religions."

I quote from *Naya Shivala*, *Sooni pari hui hai muddat se dil ki basti* (For a long time my heart has been lying barren)

Aa ik naya Shivala is desh main bana dein (Let's build a new Shivala in our country)

Duniya ke tirath se ooncha ho tirath apna (Higher than the world's temples be our temple)

Daamane-aasma se iska kalash mila dein (So that its kalash may touch the skies)

Har subah uth ke jaayen (Every morning we wake up and go)

Mantar ho meethe meethe (Chanting mantras so sweet)

Saare pujarion ko mai preet ki pila dein (Make all the priests drink the wine of love)

Shakti bhi shanti bhi bhakto ke geet main hai (In the songs of the bhaktas one finds peace and strength)

Dharti ke vasion ki mukti preet main hai. (Love alone can liberate the people of this earth.)

Hindostan likh de maathe pe is sanam ke (Inscribe the word 'Hindustan' on the forehead of my beloved)

Bhoole huye tarane duniya ko phir suna dein. (Let the world hear forgotten melodies again)

“I Love *Vande Matram*, but...”

○ Ahmed Rashid Shervani

Aankhon ki hai jo Ganga le leke us se paani, Is devta ke aage ik naher si baha dein. (Let the Ganga of our tears flow in front of this Deity).

And he concludes, "let us burn once and for all, the conflicts and quarrels between religions." (*dharmon ke yeh bakhede, aag main jalaa dein*)

Why don't the Muslims ask for the ban of Iqbal's poem? Why do we teach it to our children as a masterpiece of Urdu poetry?

Also, why did Shakeel Badayooni write the famous *bhajan*, '*Man tarapat Hari darshan ko aaaj*?' (My heart today yearns for the *darshan* of Hari) Why did Naushaad set it to tune? Why did Mohammad Rafi sing it?

Why did Nazeer Akbarabadi write the poem:

Kyaa kyaa kahooin main Krishna Kanhahaiyya ka baalpan?

(How do I describe the beauties of Krishna's childhood?)

Why did Meer Taqi Meer write: *Meer ke deen-o-mazhab ko ab poochho kyaa ho unne toe, Qashqa khaincha, dair main baithaa, kab kaa tark Islam kiyaa.*

(Why ask about Meer's religion now, when he has renounced Islam long ago, put on a *tilak* on his forehead and sat in a temple?).



Are they all *kaafirs*? I also tell fellow Muslims, which Muslim does *not* take interest on his savings account in the bank or on his Provident Fund account, despite the fact that taking interest has been listed in Islam as a bigger sin than eating pork? Which Muslim does not see films in which *naa-mehram* women not only expose their faces but a lot else?

Which Muslim does not violate Islam ten times a day? Will heaven fall on our heads if we just sing *Vande Matram*?

However, I wish to put on record that while *Vande Matram* is a lovely song, the novel *Anand Math* in which it appears was quite communal. At times, it is so anti-Muslim that it virtually tends to support the British against the Muslims. This aspect should also not be ignored if the correct and complete picture is to be presented before the public.

The communal, fascist Hindus (who are a blot on the fair name of Hindus) have the least right to order any Muslim to sing *Vande Matram*. Many Muslims, who consider it a sin to sing *Vande Matram* are much more patriotic than the big-guns of *Hindutva* who worship Hitler more than they worship the Bharat Mata (Mother India). *Vande Matram* is a national song. It is *not* the National Anthem.

If we attack only Muslim communalism, we defeat our very purpose because we tend to give strength to Hindu communalism and if Hindu communalism gets strength, it is bound to strengthen Muslim communalism on the rebound. Similarly if we attack only Hindu communalism, we tend to boost to Muslim communalism and thus we help to strengthen Hindu communalism on the rebound. □