

Blasphemy law in Pakistan and Salman Taseer's murder

- Babar Khan

A couple of weeks back I wrote two small notes on the subject dealing with the blasphemy law in Pakistan. One under the title *“Pakistan has lost its way somewhere between Aafia Siddiqui and Aasia Bibi”* and the other as *“Pakistan's Ruth Yatra”*

In them I tried to argue against the inherent hypocrisy involved in the affair and the fact that it was a potential minefield that we walk through as a nation. I pointed out what should have been obvious to all the players in the game, especially the leaders of our religiopolitical parties who were busy riling up public emotions. I forewarned :

”A call has gone out for another Yatra there; a 'long march' in defense of the faith. It seems it is their faith that is under attack this time around. They want to defend 'Namoos-e-Rasool' pbuh. They are braying for blood in his name whose magnanimity knew no bounds - who forgave those who had inflicted verbal abuse and bodily injury on him - even those who had killed and mutilated his loved ones. Who even had compassion for animals during times when humans were treated no better than animals themselves. In his name they will rile up the people so a few more homes will be burnt and a few more people will be killed just because THEY are not like US. They are THEY and we are US.”

What I feared has come to pass since then. The Governor of Punjab has fallen in the face of hatred instigated by the so called Ulema. My personal take on the matter is that Islam is inherently an inclusive religion. It sees itself not in isolation but as a continuity going back to the dawn of human existence. According to its creed even Adam –the first man- was a Muslim and it has been Islam that all the Prophets and reformers of ancient times preached. Islam gave special privileges to ‘people of the book’. It was unique in that respect among all the major faith systems. One of the Uzdawaj-e-Mutuhuraat was a Coptic Christian and is known to us as Huzrat Maria Qubtia RA or ‘Mary the Copt’.

I am no Mufti. I will leave the theological discussion to the Ulema but as a Muslim who happens to love our Prophet pbuh, all this does not seem to be right. It goes against the very ethos of Islam and the teachings of our beloved Prophet pbuh and the examples that he set before us – examples of magnanimity and love for all of mankind.