

**LET'S FIGHT HATE
TOGETHER**

मज़हब नहीं सिखाता
आपस में बैर रखना



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We, the people of India are standing at a crossroad. On the one hand violent, divisive forces are battling to occupy our hearts and minds, selling a homogenous version of India through propaganda and force. On the other hand stands India herself - an ancient, diverse, generous motherland. A nation that exists as a confluence of the many rivers of faith that flow through it. For thousands of years we, the practitioners of these faiths, have negotiated a shared living. We have argued and reasoned, fought and loved, rejected and accepted and learned how to live with each other. We have recognised our internal inequalities and argued and organised for change and reform. And now they want to divide us. Carefully planned, barbaric hate is their weapon of choice. Unsubstantiated untruths are spread through the misuse of official and unofficial media. The peace in our village, town or city or neighbourhood is being willfully disrupted. The important questions of our livelihoods, hunger, education, health and the environment, the very future of our children, are all being ignored.

What is to be done? Should we sit back and watch as hate takes over our lives? As swords and trishuls rule over us, substituting the rule of law, silencing reasoned argument? Do we accept this wanton destruction of lives and properties amidst us and look away?

Or do we step in, firmly and collectively? Spot and stop hate in its tracks. We join forces within our neighbourhoods, housing societies and bastis, professions and workplaces. We become the vocal voices of reason who can dispel the gathering clouds of violence around us.

Hate Hurts, Harmony Works we say. We together demand that the Indian Constitutional Vision, clear in its Preamble, equality, liberty and fraternity, yes communal communal harmony and peace in our neighborhoods, is guaranteed to us, as citizens of free India.

It is really quite simple and requires nothing more than coming together, an articulation of our humanity.

STEP 1: HAVE FAITH IN EACH OTHER

Yes, our names are different and the way our hands join together in prayer are different. Yes, we seem to have different tastes in food and our festivals are different. But are we really so different?

We have lived together for thousands of years. The threads of our lives are interwoven into a fine cloth [jhini chadariya]. We are present in each other's languages, in the words we use, words that express love and anger, words we pray with. We can taste each other in the food we eat. We can ask, is the khatti dal hindu or muslim? What about the music we listen to? Here, Khusro's tabla keeps time to Saraswati's veena. This is our shared culture. This is the way we live. So yes, we know each other's names, we know and respect each others' customs. We participate in each other's joys and sorrows. We break bread together. We celebrate each other's festivals. We babysit each others' children. We are neighbors, not enemies simply because a politically motivated section is telling us so.

ईश्वर अल्लाह तेरो नाम
सबको सन्मति दे भगवान

We must continue not to just have faith in each other but express this faith. We must trust each other. We must talk to each other. Differences as there will be must be settled through dialogue and discussion, even argument. What we must say no to is this: we do not brandish swords or pick up stones in each other's presence. There can be no space for violence in Buddha's land, Gandhi's or Maulana Azad's India, Ambedkar of Phule's Bharat.

We must respect each other's differences. And because we are not so different from each other, in loving our neighbours, we may after all be loving ourselves more.

STEP 2: BEWARE OF MANIPULATION

Is the news filling you with anger and helplessness? Are you only now learning about injustice perpetrated against your community that nobody knew about before? Are your religious sentiments being constantly undermined? By a minority?

Have you considered the possibility that an organised team of well trained professionals is selling us all this propaganda? That you may be consuming opinion as news? Is it possible that the 'urgent news', 'undeniable truth', 'real history' and disturbing images and grainy video Whatsapp forward (forwarded many times) that you have just received is FAKE NEWS and is meant to make you angry or sow seeds of division in your heart?

These days every household has at least one mobile phone, and almost everyone has a social media account or at the very least, uses chat services like Whatsapp. This is where we often encounter most of the hate. Sometimes it is by faceless trolls and IT cell people who make hateful or ridicule-filled hashtags trend, or influential community leaders who make inflammatory speeches that incite hate and violence. Sometimes there are also veiled threats or calls for social or economic boycott.

Beware of misinformation (misleading or false claims spread in an innocent belief that it is true) and disinformation (deliberately composed fake or hateful information) on our phones and on TV, in private conversations and political gatherings.

Typically, the steps to combat this spread of propaganda are similar to the 'test-and-trace' method used to track the spread of the Covid-19 virus. They are:

- Test the accuracy of the content: Google it. Check multiple sources. If it's true then you may encounter it many times over. If its fake, a number of fact checking websites online may have already called it out.
- Trace it back to the source: Who is sharing it? Where did they get it? Is the same person sharing the same kind of stories repeatedly? Why?
- Isolate it to keep it from spreading further: Just stop. Don't forward it. If it calls for violence or contains violence imagery, don't share it further. Break the chain.

Always be skeptical — don't share content unless you verify it. If the message invokes extreme emotions, makes you want to act against minorities, raises your anger or anxiety levels and a sense of revenge, there is a good chance the message serves propaganda.

Forming Youth Groups and Peacemaker Initiatives against Hate, using creative messaging, theatre and song to dispel it, will not simply dispel the poison being spread in our midst but empower us and strengthen our resolve to do this together. Acting and reporting such hate which violates Indian law (sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Information Technology Act makes us involved and responsible citizens. We at CJP can help you train yourselves to spot and counter this Hate.

If you are concerned about the spread of such hate and would like to see action against perpetrators, then send the content to CJP AT cjpindia@gmail.com or Whatsapp it to us on 7506661171 OR click on cjp.org.in/hate-hatao to REPORT HATE. We will help you fight it.

STEP 3: KEEP CALM AND TRUST THE CONSTITUTION

India has well defined laws against hate speech and any effort to promote disharmony, enmity or feelings of hatred between different groups on the grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language is a punishable offence. Babasaheb Ambedkar's constitution offers us more clarity -

Article 14: Equality Before the Law (all Indians are Equal in the Eyes of the Law)

Article 15: Prohibition of Discrimination on Grounds of Religion, Race, Caste, Sex or Place of Birth (No

discrimination in State and society)

Article 16: Equality of Opportunity in Matters of Public Employment

Article 17: Abolition of Untouchability

Article 19: Right to Freedom of Expression, Association, Movement and Freedom to perform Business

Article 21: Protection of Life and Personal Liberty (Right to Life)

These are the non-negotiable fundamental rights guaranteed under Chapter III of the Indian Constitution. But these are also values that need to be defended, by each one of us.

Under Chapter IV, the Directive Principles of State Policy, India aims to be a State and society committed to social justice where an equal and dignified wage, the right to work and humane conditions of work, promotion of early childhood care, participation of workers in employment and the right to nutrition are all aims and guarantees that we need to work towards.

Our inspirations for these ideals may come from different sources - the religious and the secular. But our aim must be to uphold these basic principles of equality, freedom, dignity and non-discrimination of all people, all Indians.

STEP 4: DON'T BE AFRAID, DON'T BE ANGRY

Don't let political operatives scare you and instigate you in the name of religion. In India we do not elect governments to pit one religion against another, to set one group against the other.

We elect them to, at the very least, give us jobs and keep prices in check. They are supposed to make laws for us, not break the law themselves. Remember, hate speech and dog whistles can lead to violence. They are signals for foot soldiers and cadres to take the law into their own hands. This projection of violence is meant to scare us and silence us. It is sometimes also meant to enlist us in their hate projects. Don't be afraid. Don't be angry. Don't get provoked. Keep a calm head and calm others around you down.

Unfortunately, many times violence breaks out no matter how hard you try to avoid it. In such a case neighbours should be able to rely on each other. This is a true test of our bond. Will we stand by and watch as someone causes harm to our friend or will we step in and defend them? If you see someone in your locality being abused or targeted, especially if they are in a minority, speak up.

Stand united with your fellow citizens.

STEP 5: FORM MOHALLA COMMITTEES

We, at CJP, have been spearheading unique Citizens Initiatives, (one model is the existing Mohalla Committee) that can help neighbourhoods protect themselves better. These are organised groups or committees of people who represent a cross-section of the neighbourhoods residents. They work in close association with various authorities including but not limited to the local police, fire department, municipal authorities etc., so that in case violence breaks out, there can be a first line of defense to protect people. The entire process of interacting with local authorities in a crisis situation can be streamlined using these Committees who work at peace time, week on week organising activities, ensuring communication. This will also go a long way in busting rumours and preventing violence.

STEP 6: CAPTURE IMAGES OF EVERYDAY HARMONY AND CO-EXISTENCE

Remember that image of dozens of Survivors of Police violence offering Roses or Floral Offerings to the Offenders? Or the Smile that shines through the Tears? It is that Image, or Video or that Little Story that can turn the hate-filled tide. Tell a different story. Start a Campaign in your neighbourhood of capturing such images of #EverdayHarmony #EverydayCo-Existence and sharing them on every kind of platform and media, physical and digital. Let your neighbourhood and town become known for such citizen's creativity.

All and each one of us need to come together in small and large groups, in public spaces, roads, parks, neighbourhoods to reflect our caring sharing diversity and hope. This could be a common feast or meal, could be an all citizens' Iftar, could be an all faith meeting for peace and harmony, could be sheer korma on Eid Day, it could be card and floral exchanges in classrooms and schools. Could be sisterhood Rakhsha Bandhans! Could be neighbourhood Santa Clauses for books and drawing materials! Let our neighbourhoods resound with such acts of caring and joy. Already we lean, need care and share for each other. Let's also record these moments of hope.

Let's do this Together. Hate can be spotted and it can be stopped.

There are many of us. We are the majority. We, the quietly resilient people of India. We, the peace loving people of India. We, the seekers and believers, the faithful and the skeptic, agnostics and atheists of India. We are its poets, philosophers, weavers, tillers, emperors and soldiers. This is our country, our land. We are its past, present and future. And it is we the people who together can fight this epidemic of hate and bring to heel those who want to divide and rule over us. We can stop this violence and give harmony a chance - starting from our minds, our homes and our mohallas.

To learn more about how to set up different Citizens Initiatives (including a Mohalla Committee) or any other information pertinent for maintaining communal harmony, contact CJP at:

EMAIL: info@cjp.org.in | PHONE: 7506661171 |
DM on Twitter/Facebook/Instagram: @cjpindia

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