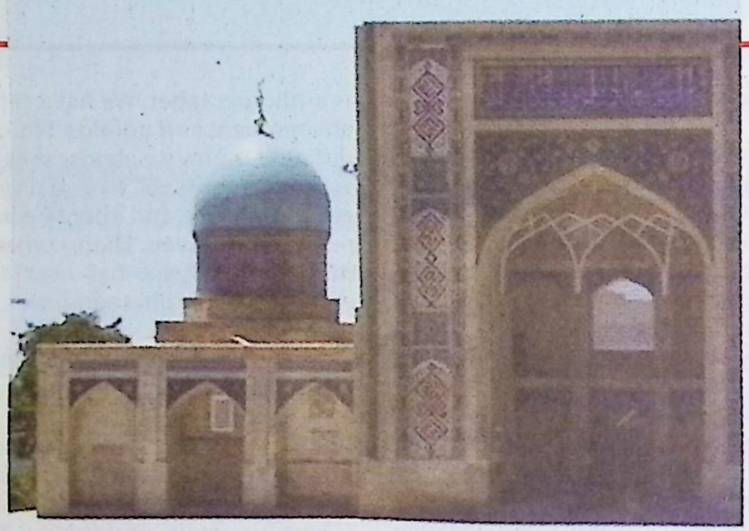




Drawing a Line

NADIA KABIR BARB

I am sure I have said and written on more than one occasion how tired I am of having Islam misinterpreted and people using the term terrorist and Muslim in the same breath. So you can imagine my utter horror when I came across the far-right Dutch MP Geert Wilder actually calling the Quran a 'fascist book' and comparing it to Adolf Hitler's 'Mein Kampf'. The more I read about the MP and his views, the more appalled I became. A while ago, he wrote in a Dutch national newspaper De Volkskrant, "I've had enough of Islam in the Netherlands; let not one more Muslim immigrate, I've had enough of the Qur'an in the Netherlands: forbid that fascist book." In an interview with the Guardian Newspaper last year, he told them that Islam "is not a religion, it's the ideology of a retarded culture". That would make almost 1.5 billion people fall into that category.

To add insult to injury he has also made a film called 'Fitna' - which is a 15-minute movie that accuses the Qur'an of inciting violence and aggression. I have to admit that I have not watched the film myself having neither the desire nor inclination to sit through 15 minutes of one man's warped view of my faith, so I can only tell you what I have heard about 'Fitna'. According to those who have seen the film, it shows images of 9/11, the 2003 bomb attacks in Madrid and also the death of murdered Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh, interspersed with an assortment of quotations from the Qur'an. Last month Mr. Wilder was invited by Lord Pearson and Baroness Cox, both members of the House of Lords, to screen his film but was subsequently banned entry into Britain by the Home Office because they believed his anti-Muslim opinions, as expressed in his film, would "threaten community harmony and therefore public safety". The Dutch politician stated to the media that he would still travel to London for the screening of his film and flew into Heathrow Airport only to be questioned by immigration and refused entry.

Part of me felt a sense of relief at the decision taken by the UK government to deny Mr. Wilders entry into the country. A spokesman from the Muslim Council of Britain stated,"We have no problem with the challenge of criticisms to our faith, but the film that will be screened by Lord Pearson and Baroness Cox is nothing less than a cheap and tacky attempt to whip up hysteria against Muslims". There were also protests that took place in some Muslim countries, such as Indonesia and Pakistan and even the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon regarded the film 'Fitna' as "offensively anti-Islamic". I am all for freedom of speech but this was taking things too far. Had Mr. Geert Wilder been an authority on the teachings of the Qur'an and had extensive knowledge of Islam then there would be some merit in putting his views forward even in the format of a short film or have some formal discourse with named theologians to debate his views. But to try and show some correlation between acts of terrorism and randomly chosen excerpts from the Qur'an was offensive to me.