

Muslims in Diaspora Negotiating Islam through Muslim Public Sphere and the Role of Media

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Abstract : The idea of universal Islam tends to exaggerate the extent of homogeneity in Islamic beliefs and practices across Muslim communities. In the age of migration, various Muslim communities are in diaspora. The immediate implication of this is what happens to Islam in diaspora? How Islam gets represented in new forms? Such pertinent questions need to be dealt with. This paper shall draw on the idea of religious transnationalism, primarily transnational Islam. There are multiple ways to conceptualize transnational phenomenon with reference to Islam in terms of flow of people, transnational organizations and networks; Ummah oriented solidarity and the new Muslim public sphere. This paper specifically deals with the new Muslim public sphere. It primarily refers to the space and networks enabled by new media and communication technologies, whereby Muslim identity and Islamic normativity are rehearsed, debated by people in different locales. A new sense of public is emerging across Muslim communities, which needs to be contextualized. This paper uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data elicited through content analysis of audio-visuals on social media and secondary sources of information ranging from books, articles, journals, etc. The basic aim of the paper is to focus on the emerging Muslim public sphere and the role of media in expanding public spheres of Islam. It also explores how Muslims in diaspora negotiate Islam and Islamic practices through media and the new Muslim public sphere. This paper cogently weaves in discussions firstly, of re-intellectualization of Islamic discourse in the public sphere. In other words, how Muslims have come to reimagine their collective identity and critically look at fundamental principles and authoritative tradition. Secondly, the emerging alternative forms of Islam by young Muslims in diaspora. In other words, how young Muslims search for unorthodox ways and media for religious articulation, including music, clothing and TV. This includes transmission and distribution of Islam in diaspora in terms of emerging 'media Islam' or 'soundbite Islam'. The new Muslim public sphere has offered an arena to a large number of participants to critically engage with Islam, which leads not only to a critical engagement with traditional forms of Islamic authority but also emerging alternative forms of Islam and Islamic practices.

Keywords : Islam, media, Muslims, public sphere

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