THE (UN) HOLY PUNISHMENTS - A CRITICAL ACCOUNT OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IN PAKISTANI AND MALDIVIAN LAWS

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ABSTRACT

Religious extremism is dangerously notorious and can cause more harm to society when it seeps into legal frameworks. While the law is an instrument to resolve conflict within societies, it could equally give rise to resentment and result in revolt against the law. This paper deals with two countries in the SAARC region that reflect extremist intonations in their laws on free speech. Pakistan's blasphemy laws and Maldives's laws against dissent exemplify the intricate problem posed by religious extremism and radicalism finding a way through legal frameworks. This presents an important question for the adequacy of liberal interpretation in toning down the fundamentalist undertones in such laws.

Keywords: religious extremism, blasphemy, Maldives, Pakistan, dissent, free speech

1. INTRODUCTION

Religious extremism is characterised by an intense ideological commitment to a belief system, demonstrated by actions that reflect fidelity to a belief system.[1] It involves actions that characterise religious groups' rites and customs, like seclusion, proselytising unbelievers, malevolence, criminalisation, and the extermination of disobedient people.[2] Members see these acts as regular activities sanctioned by religious scholars, while others may see them as fundamentalist delusions.[3]

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[1]   R. Prus, 'Terrorism, tyranny, and religious extremism as collective activity: Beyond the deviant, psychological, and power mystiques' (2005) 36(1) *American Sociologist*, 47.

[2]   L. R. Iannaccone and E. Berman, 'Religious extremism: The good, the bad, and the deadly' (2006) 126(1) Public Choice, 109, 110.

[3]   E. T. Njoku and J. Akintayo, 'Religious Extremism' in D. Leeming(ed),