



# Making it difficult to ‘Other’ the Muslim

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#TalkToAMuslim marks a symbolic victory; but it is shameful that Muslims should be made to initiate such an outreach

## Highlights

- A new hashtag, #TalkToAMuslim, began trending on Twitter earlier this week. In what is an ironic comment on the times, a campaign seeking to counter communal polarisation itself fell prey to polarisation. In a matter of hours, social media was riven into two hostile camps: one scathing in its criticism of the hashtag, and the other steadfast in its defence of it.
- Both Hindus and Muslims participated in the campaign, which involved individuals posting a selfie with a placard that held a message and the hashtag. Muslims posted selfies with messages that said, “I am an Indian Muslim, I’m human too! You can talk to me. #TalkToAMuslim.” Placards of the Hindu participants typically read, “I’m a Hindu. I talk to Muslims. Guess they are humans too, #TalkToAMuslim.”
- The immediate trigger for the campaign was the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)’s attack on Congress president Rahul Gandhi, after he met with a group of intellectuals from the Muslim community. BJP leaders ‘accused’ Mr. Gandhi of turning the Congress into a “Muslim party”.
- To the extent that this campaign serves to name the pathology — the notion that talking to Muslims is a problem — it has value. Naming the pathology is vital if one wants to stop the pathology from being normalised. Hindus who have never had a meaningful conversation with a Muslim may or may not end up talking to one as a result of this hashtag.
- Still, even if nothing comes of it at the material level, the hashtag represents a minor victory in the symbolic realm, for it is important to publicly say it — to say, ‘talk to a Muslim’ — for it is not unimaginable that, in the foreseeable future, it may prove unthinkable to say even this, with or without a hashtag.
- In that sense, saying #TalkToAMuslim is both the means and the end of the campaign. It is shameful that Indian Muslims should feel compelled to initiate such an ‘outreach’ to the majority community. But the shame of it is not theirs to bear.

Source: [The Hindu](#)