

# Love Jihad

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The 'Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance' was passed into law in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh on Nov. 28, providing jail sentences of up to ten years for Muslim men who marry Hindu women with the intention of converting them. 'Love Jihad' must be stopped at all costs, to preserve the Hindu majority in India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi (occasionally known in the White House as 'India Trump') depends almost exclusively on Hindu votes to win elections, so anything that threatens to reduce the number of Hindu voters is obviously a problem for him. People with mathematical skills, however, may calculate that the threat isn't really very big.

India's population is one-and-a-third billion people (1,353,000,000 people, to be precise), and there are currently only 195 million Muslim Indians - 14% of the whole. For Muslims to become the majority by 'love jihad' will require Muslim men to marry at least 481 million Hindu girls.

There's probably no more than 75 million Muslim men of marriageable age in India, and most of them are already married. According to Islam (and to Indian law), Muslim men can have up to four wives, but there's still not enough Muslim men to marry all those Hindu women without exceeding four wives each.

Moreover, the conspirators behind the love jihad are condemning Muslim women in India to very crowded marriages, or alternatively no marriage at all. They clearly haven't thought this through properly.

Four more BJP-ruled states are already planning to pass identical laws against 'love jihad', but for the sake of argument let's assume for a moment that they don't work. Those wicked Muslim boys go on marrying innocent Hindu girls. How long would it take for the 'love jihad' to create a Muslim-majority India?

I'm glad you asked. By my calculation, around 200,000 years, give or take a millennium or two. So the disloyal thought occurs that maybe the BJP's goal in passing laws against an alleged Muslim 'love jihad' isn't really to defend the majority status of the Hindu population and its own voting base.

Maybe it's to stir up anti-Muslim hatred and paranoia and energise Hindu voters who are getting a bit disillusioned with the BJP.

That's not to say that Uttar Pradesh's Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the part-time Hindu monk who passed the first of these laws, is not a religious extremist and a fanatical anti-Muslim bigot. Of course he is. But there are more calculated people in the BJP who simply work out what will play best with Hindu voters.

The BJP won a landslide victory in last year's national election thanks in large part to a fortuitous military confrontation with Pakistan at just the right time, but its economic performance has been poor and it has been losing state elections even in its traditional strongholds.

Unemployment is high, the BJP's initial response to the coronavirus was chaotic, and the farmers are starting to revolt. And, of course, the government lost a mini-war with China in the Himalayas last June. It's definitely time for a morale-boosting hate campaign, and unfortunately a lot of people in northern India, especially higher-caste BJP supporters, quite enjoy hating Muslims.

Of all the populist leaders that have come to power in democratic countries in the past few years, Modi is by far the most dangerous - partly because he is cleverer and more disciplined than people like Donald Trump, Boris Johnson and Rodrigo Duterte, and partly because India is the second-biggest country in the world.

Actually, Modi is more like Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan: also clever, also cynically manipulating religion even though he is genuinely a believer ? and seventeen years in power. Indian democracy has quite deep roots, but it probably wouldn't survive seventeen years of Modi.

Indian journalist Tavleen Singh may have been right when she wrote recently in the Indian Express: ?We seem in India to be regressing into a Hindu version of Pakistan.? After 73 years of democracy in India, that would be a very great pity.