The Swollen Rose of Humanity

Humanity is a swollen rose, navigating through the terrain of falsehood.

Uncertainty, turmoil, and discord have afflicted our society with the escalating diffusion of misinformation and falsity. As an American-Pakistani Muslim, my community and I have been deeply grieved by this dilemma. The unfortunate truth is that the media portrays both Muslims and many South Asians as terrorists. These stereotypical and prejudiced claims hinder humanity from recognizing our true selves and dignity.

As a Muslim, I have both faced and witnessed the prejudice as a result of harmful media depictions. I still remember being in my fifth-grade history class and hearing a student say, “All Muslims are bad.” These four words left a smudged stain imprinted on my heart. A blemish, I knew the only way to cleanse was through educating my peer and using my voice to advocate for justice. In a 2nd observatory report by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, it “concluded that a section of the Western media was a major factor in the collective misrepresentation about Islam and Muslims” (1). As a result, these contradictory depictions have resulted in “wrongful discrimination, bigotry, harassment, and mental and physical abuse” (1). Yet, Islam is a religion rooted in the principles of peace. A religion that condemns hatred and advocates for harmony and justice. An understanding of Islam must not be acquired from the fallacies of the media, but from engaging in benevolent and respectful conversation with a Muslim, for humanity craves more listening, and less judging.

The neglecting of cultural appreciation in favor of illustrating a marginalized community in a negative light, showcases the Western media's tendency to showcase falsity. As a Pakistani-American, I have also borne witness to how the media describes my parents' motherland. In an article written by Poornananda entitled 'Coverage of South Asia in two leading US newspapers,' he found that the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Washington Post* gravitated towards sharing merely negative stories on South Asia, such as those on crime, while topics focusing on the sciences and arts were lacking (1). As a Pakistani-American, my heart aches in response. My Pakistani culture is a vital part of my individuality; it is a symbol of my love. By seeing how the media promotes a narrative that neglects the beautiful aspects of my culture, I am frustrated. However, I am also inspired to continue advocating for the richness of my culture, for the weapon to combat misinformation is the strength of one's voice.

Humanity is a swollen rose.

Just as a rose wounded from neglect, continues to blossom and flourish, humanity too, bruised and broken, must rise from the depths of indifference to reach the fertile grounds of true democracy. It is the brokenness and innate humanity of each individual that must unite to create the melody of justice. Truth is humanity's purpose, for we were each fashioned from the clay of integrity. Our voices must rise like the phoenix from ashes, for when our voices proclaim the truth, justice will always prevail.

Works Cited

1. Shahwar, Deeba. “Portrayal of the Muslim World in the Western Print Media Post-9/11: Editorial Treatment in ‘The New York Times’ and ‘The Daily Telegraph.’” *Pakistan Horizon*, vol. 67, no. 3/4, Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, 2014, pp. 133–66, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44988714.