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Corona Corner

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# Muslims in Bengal's Bhatpara municipality face religious discrimination

*At a time when several Muslim vendors are not being allowed to sell their products by Hindu vigilantes at many places in India, Muslims in Bengal also face religious discrimination*

By [Shabina Akhtar](#) - April 16, 2020

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*Bhatpara Municipality | Courtesy: sangbadpratidin.in (File photo)*



**Kolkata:** Rukhsar Perween, a class 10 student has to walk a few extra miles to collect her drinking water, amid the on-going lockdown. The Bhatpara municipal water supply tap in her area has been cordoned off by Hindus, and Muslims have been told to get their drinking water from elsewhere.



“They say that we are Muslims and hence we can transmit coronavirus to them. They have put up barricades of bamboo and dupatta around the tap. We can’t even dare to enter that spot for water. So, even during the lockdown either me or my sister have to go to a far-off municipal tap to collect drinking water,” said Rukhsar.

Ruskhsar is not a resident of UP or Gujarat, from where several videos showing Muslim vendors being told to not enter Hindu areas, have gone viral. She is resident of Coolie Lane Number 6 of Kankinara, in Bhatpara Municipality of North 24 Parganas, West Bengal.

Thanks to the Tablighi Jamaat related constant debate on mainstream media, and BJP IT cell spreading fake news against Muslims, Islamophobia is on the rise in India, even when the country is under lockdown. The religious [polarisation](#) has reached Bengal too, which takes pride in its mutli-cultural society. Bhatpara Municipality of North 24 Parganas, which had witnessed communal riots, immediately after the General Elections in 2019, is again witnessing discrimination against minority community, especially those living in the lower strata of the society.

Sharing a similar experience was Zainab Khatoon, a resident of Darba Line in Kankinara. While speaking to **eNewsroom**, she disclosed, “We don’t have enough stored [ration](#). Hence, we often visit local grocery shops to buy essentials. However, after the Tablighi Jamaat incident, the shopkeeper of other faith, don’t take money from our hands. They have kept a small bowl for us to place the money.” She paused and then added, “They even call us Corona Virus and even say that they will chase us out as they did during the 2019 riots. How can we be called Corona Virus? We are not even allowed to collect water from the same municipality water taps. We are told to go elsewhere.”

When asked, if they had reported the case, she said, “To whom do we report? This has become a regular affair.”

Confirming the same was Debashish Pal, a social activist, who has been running a coaching centre in areas that have seen communal tension during the Bhatpara riots. Speaking to **eNewsroom**, he said, “I have been providing relief materials in and around Kankinara and people from the Muslim community have spoken to me about the discrimination, they are having to face. And I must mention that it’s not just these two girls who are being called Corona or being barred from filling water, post-Tablighi Jamaat incident. Then the entire community in this area is having to face such prejudice.”

When **eNewsroom** contacted Officer-in-Charge of Bhatpara, Rajshree Dutta, regarding religious discrimination being faced by Muslims of Bhatpara, he said, “I have not received any complaint regarding this issue. But then given the time we are in; this is nothing new. Such reports or cases are emerging from different cities across India too.”



Meanwhile, Pal, said, that he would be raising the issue with the appropriate officials. "I will not just intimate the concerned officials but will also write a letter to the commissioner of police, Bhatpara."

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**Shabina Akhtar**



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## 1 COMMENT

**Mubarak Ali Mubarki** April 17, 2020 At 3:46 am

The picture showing a railway station "Bhatpara", doesn't match the story. Bhatpara is a municipal area, and the name of its station is Kankinara. One can even reach Bhatpara from Jagaddal Stn.

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