

Hate speech, I feel, is one of those issues whose seriousness you can't fully grasp until you or a loved one are directly affected by it. That is because our societies are constructed along the lines of individualism; we are more concerned with our own rights and liberties than we are with those of others. That is not to say rights and liberties are not important, they are, of course, fundamental and ensure the protection of both our freedoms and rights. However, freedoms, such as 'freedom of expression', when understood only through our own lenses tend to be detrimental to other people's rights. I believe tackling such issues requires that we move from a highly individualist paradigm to a more collective one in which we acknowledge that our own rights and freedoms have limitations as no one's rights are more crucial than another's. That is why usually only when you or a loved one become the target of hate speech, you realize the seriousness of the situation.

There is, however, another aspect that gravely influences the manner in which individuals relate to hate speech, namely the fact that people tend to perceive hate speech as only that: speech, words, discussions. These actions, of course, trivialize the impact of hate speech and diminish the prospect of comprehending it in a much more holistic manner. Nevertheless, if we adopt this holistic approach, we find that hate often starts with speech and just as often can lead to violence. That is because the discourses we adopt in our daily lives normalize certain behaviors and norms, hence creating the illusion that hatred can be justified on specific grounds. Hatred, of course, is not and should not be justified on any grounds whatsoever, but only if we understand how hate speech can lead to the escalation of hatred, can we adequately educate people in a more tolerant and humane spirit.