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## 'JIHAD': A testing time for Indian Muslims

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***"According to Quran, Muslims have a duty to oppose those who reject Islam, by armed struggle if necessary, and Jihad has been invoked to justify both the expansion and defense of Islam"*** (Chamber Dictionary of World History)

Muslim intellectuals may agree or disagree with this Quranic concept of Jihad, but in view of the killing of innocents by Islamic terrorist groups, it is now their moral responsibility to interpret this word to ensure that Muslims do not remain confused with the pro-Taliban concept of Jihad. To understand the prevailing unrest among the members of Muslim community of the country, we may look back to the history of Jihad, which dates back to the year 712 A.D., when Mohammad Bin Qasim invaded Sindh. This history of barbaric Jihad though changing its course with ups and downs for various reasons, those who have not lost their historical memory, may be aware that radical followers of Islam have kept the spirit of this 'holy war' alive even today.

The Muslim community in India has the largest number of illiterates. No sincere effort to eradicate large-scale illiteracy from the community or inspire them for modern and scientific education has ever been made by Muslim intellectuals. Thus the educational backwardness of the community is the main reason as to why the spirit of Jihad, which began with the advent of Islam in this country is still being carried on by them. Contrary to the views of some Muslim intellectuals like Maulana Wahiduddin, Director, Islamic centre and others that pro Taliban call by some of the Muslim clerics in India is not Islamic, the members of community in the country are not ready to accept them.

***"Islam is one faith, which has divided humanity into two permanently warring factions: those who believe in Allah and Mohammad, are the God's party, and those who do not, are the Devil's party. The formers have the most sacred duty to eliminate and subdue the latter..... Islam calls it 'Jihad', which guarantees the Mujahid (holy warrior) salvation i.e. seat in Paradise".***

(Anwar Shaikh in his book entitled Islam and Human Rights published by A.Ghosh, Houston, USA, page 37)

Well known writer and Nobel Prize winner V.S.Naipaul in his new book 'Half a Life' is quoted to be of the view that "***Islam has had a calamitous effect on converted peoples. To be converted you have to destroy your past, destroy your history. You have to stamp on it, you have to say 'my ancestral culture does not exist, it does not matter'***" ( Hindustan Times, New Delhi Dated October 5,2001).

The perception of Naipaul must have been based on his deep study of the Jihadi spirit of Islam defined by Anwar Shaikh, as over 90 percent of Indian Muslims are converted and they have been made to completely forget their pre-medieval heritage. Hardly, a microscopic strength of Indian Muslims could claim to have their Lineage from Arab, Turk, Persia or Afghan.

**According to Professor K.S. Lal, a renowned historian on medieval India, the strength of Hindu population got reduced by about 80 million between the year 1000 and 1525. A vast majority of them must have been the ancestors of present day Muslims in India, who faced the onslaught of Jihad. Even though, the Indian Muslims have completely forgotten their past as loyal soldiers of Islam, they may like to carry out some intellectual exercise to redefine the word Jihad to help bringing peace in society.**

**Salman Rushdie, a noted writer has pointed out that "there needs to be a thorough examination by Muslims every where, of why it is that the faith they love breeds so many violent mutant strains." (Quote from 'Guardian' dated October 6,2001 published in Hindustan Times dated October 7).**

The question is- whether the Indian Muslims will come out of their time warp? Will they use the post September 11 situation as an opportunity to come to terms with themselves, their religion, their country and the society at large? We hope they would.

Today, the Indian Muslims are at the crossroads to understand the Jihadi terrorism **particularly when the global landscape is becoming more and more violent**. The Muslim intellectuals may have a valid reason to disassociate Islam from terrorism, but their muted view on the issue has left the common Muslims with no option but to accept the pro-Taliban voices of the Mullahs and the clerics.

*"Many interpreters of Jihad in the Muslim world, and an equal number in the west, have explained Jihad with double meaning. It stands for Jihad bi al saif (holy war by means of sword) and for Jihad al nafs (literally, struggle for one's soul against one's own base instinct). Both interpretations are true, but Islamic militants have rejected the spiritual explanation as dangerous heresy..." (Walter Laquer, an American expert on terrorism -Pioneer dated October 2,01)*

Ever since the advent of Islam in India, common Muslims have understood the concept of Jihad as a "holy war in the way of Allah", which for them is the ideological root of this militant faith. Jihad was initially, a fight against the idol worshipers in Arabia, but subsequently it was used as a weapon to spread Islam in other parts of the world. Recent terrorist attacks on America and similar attacks in Kashmir and its extension

in other parts of India have by and large been understood or misunderstood as part of the Jihadi onslaught by Islam.

Since there is no effective intellectual challenge against the prevailing interpretation of the word Jihad from within the community, the Muslims in India are left with no option but to accept the jihadi view of Islam of medieval India as explained to them by the self-appointed custodians of the faith. According to historians Jihad in medieval India was the bloodiest barbarism in the history of mankind. The word is however, still viewed as a part of the holy duty of every Muslim for the establishment of Darul Islam in non-Islamic countries.

Prevailing ignorance about Islam among the common Muslims in India has become the strength of the vested interests in the community. In the absence of any spiritual knowledge of Islamic scriptures they are in a stage of perpetual confusion about Jihad. On the other hand, the responsibility of the interpretation of Islamic scriptures continues to be in the hands of a section of the Islamic scholars, who never allow any intellectual to explain differently or have an objective debate on such a controversial issue. Far away from modern and scientific education, the Muslim masses continue to depend upon the madrassa education, which does not allow them to develop any scientific approach towards the society in which they live. Muslim intellectuals by and large are scared of expressing independent views on the possibility of any reform in Islam with the changing times.

In this backdrop of killing of innocent people by Islamic terrorists in Kashmir for more than a decade and recent terrorist attacks on America, the world is divided into pro and anti terrorism camps. Since Muslim intellectuals are not ready to confront the challenge of Jihadi radicals, the Muslim masses are bound to follow the dictates of the self-serving Muslim leaders, who by and large are found expressing the move of anti terrorism camp as a challenge to Islam. A general perception is therefore, gaining ground that terrorism and Jihad are the two sides of the same coin.

The Quranic Concept of War, a book written by Brigadier Malik of Pakistan justified the vision of Zia-ul Haq about Pakistan as a Jihadi state. According to a newspaper report (N.S.Rajaram in Pioneer dated October 2) all Pakistani soldiers carry an Urdu summary of the book entitled 'Jihad'. The clue to the terror doctrine according to Brigadier Malik lies in Quran. He said, "*The Quranic military strategy thus enjoins us to prepare ourselves for war to the utmost in order to strike terror in the heart of the enemy, known or hidden*". He observed, "*Terror is not a means of imposing decision upon the enemy, it is a decision to impose upon him.*" **The key word here is "TERROR"**. Compare it with what *General Musharraf* of Pakistan said sometime ago. He defined Jihad as a "humane" concept and its execution in Jammu and Kashmir as "freedom struggle"

Some news papers report that Pakistan aided Islamic fundamentalist organisations trained on the pattern of the Lashkar-i-Tayyaba and Taliban militia are operating in India and its neighbouring countries Nepal and Bangla Desh. These groups are known to be busy day and night to pollute the Indian Muslims' mind with the Jihadi concept of 'holy war'. Some of them are:

- \* Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA).
- \* Muslim United Liberation Front of Assam (MULFA).
- \* People's Liberation Front (PLF).
- \* International Liberation Army (ILA).
- \* Muslim Security Force (MSF).
- \* Liberation of Islamic Tiger Force (LITF).
- \* Muslim Security Council of Assam (MSCA).
- \* United Liberation Militia of Assam (ULMA).
- \* Minority Peoples Action Committee (MPAC).
- \* Muslim Volunteers Force (MVF).
- \* Mujahid Vahini and Jubo Command.

Some of these organizations are known to have an active connection with Kashmiri Islamic terrorist organizations and are allegedly enjoying financial and moral support from International Islamic organisations.

**SIMI** (Student Islamic Movement of India since banned), is known to be a fundamentalist organisation. It has spread its activities in UP, Maharashtra and many other states. Recently the work of spreading the rumour of burning of Koran and throwing the entire Kanpur City in to flames of communal riots was allegedly carried out by SIMI. Some of the office bearers of SIMI have committed an open act of treason by pouring venom against their country in their interview in media. A few quotes reproduced below are worth noting.

*"The Quran is our constitution. If the Indian constitution clashes with the Quran, we are not bound by the constitution"* (Reyaazul Mushahil, SIMI's Bihar Zone Secretary).

*"Whenever we come to power, we will destroy the temple, even if it is of gold and build a masjid there"*(Sajid Mansuri, SIMI's Ahmedabad Zonal Secretary). (Times of India, September 30)

Pro-Osama bin Laden slogans during anti-American demonstration in Kashmir and similar tension in the statements of some Muslim leaders in India like Syed Ahmed Bukhari, Maulana Abdul Ahmed Nawani, Mohammad Shafi Moonis and Javed Habib of Jama Masjid, Jamat-Ulma-e-Hind, Jamat-e-Islami and National Integration Council respectively (Pioneer dated October 9,2001) are an indication of the dark clouds of Jihad hovering Indian sky and creating a depressing scene. Besides, Ahmed Bukhari in a press briefing strongly asserted that "no Muslim considers Osma bin Laden an accused" and "we will give moral support to the call of Jihad given by the Islamic Government of Afghanistan" (Hindu dated October 10). These developments are disquieting signals that would disturb the mind of common Muslims in the country.

It is now a testing time for Indian Muslims to keep themselves away from the Jihadi spirit of Islam as being propagated by Pakistan and its supporters. The shadow of Jihad being projected in the country by Islamic organisations is a danger signal, which may be detrimental to national security. The war cry of Muslim clerics against USA's attack on Afghanistan looks like an attempt to keep the spirit of Jihad alive among the followers of Islam and make the common Muslims more and more fanatical and militant. The Indian Muslims should not be taken in by the propaganda of the clerics.

With the changing times Indian Muslims may like to get the definition of Jihad re-examined by the Ulema and Muslim intellectuals to ensure that the community forgets the Jihadi spirit of medieval India and accepts in principle that nations are always guided by self-interest and not by religious sentiments.

*(The analysis is based on the personal perception of the writer. E-mail [ramashray60 @ yahoo.com](mailto:ramashray60@yahoo.com) [1])*

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