

**Opinion**

**The Jihadi Mind**

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The 'epidemic' outbreak of jihad exploded in Pakistan during the Afghan war of 1979. A huge majority of the unemployed youth and illiterate and naive people were attracted to this pestilence. They were fascinated by the chicanery, 'heaven and hoor (gorgeous girls of paradise) after death'. Since life was already without any aim or purpose, the 'bait' gave them a direction with a destination. Many unemployed Pakistani youth became a jihadi --an occupation that gave them not only food, shelter and clothes but also weapons and a pledge that after death paradise will be under their feet and each 'mujahid' (religious warrior) will be the owner of a harem (Palace).

The jihad 'industry' found itself on the verge of bankruptcy after the fall of communism and America's disengagement from Afghanistan. It needed an immediate shot in the arm. Jihad was thus re-defined. Its ambit was broadened to justify the killing of the Muslims by the Muslims. A new field of jihadis was sown and cultivated in the form of Deobandi Taliban militants. It considered Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and Turkemans as non-believers and killed them under the renewed license of jihad granted by their godfathers i.e., the illiterate clergy of Pakistan. The state-of-the-art doctrine of jihad added fuel to the already highly inflammable Shia-Sunni tinderbox and they too waged jihad against each other in the pursuit of 'heaven and hoor' in the hereafter!

September 11th, 2001 put Pakistan in a cul-de-sac. Unity of its people irrespective of religion, sect or ethnicity and their full support to the government was extremely essential at that moment. Everyone understood it except the jihad mongers. They, while sitting in their air-conditioned Pajeros and Land Cruisers, incited the innocent and ambitious youth to join the Taliban and fight jihad against the US' cruise missiles, cluster bombs, air strikes and daisy cutters with jazba-imani (power of faith).

Around 10,000 youths joined the caravan of Maulana Sufi Mohammad of Tehreeke Nifaze Shariate Mohammadi (TNSM) and sneak into Afghanistan. When the US launched its air strikes, they realised that jazba-e-imani was not enough to defeat the Americans. The first 'fighter of Islam' who fled to save his life was Maulana Sufi Mohammad himself! And after him, the sole proprietors of Islam-the Taliban. Those who faced the US bombardment were the young Pakistani militants. Most of them were killed and the rest were made captives by the forces of the Northern Alliance and Abdul Rashid Dostum.

When Hamid Karzai recently visited Pakistan, General Musharraf requested him to release the Pakistani prisoners. Afghanistan decided to release 695 prisoners. Some 150 captives reached Peshawar last month. The hale and hearty were removed to the Central Jail and the wounded were admitted to various hospitals.

I met some of them at the Central Jail and the Lady Reading Hospital and heard conflicting stories of their plight. At the Jail, I met Ghulam Mustafa (a resident of Sargodha, 23, single, illiterate, occasional vegetable-vendor, earned 40-50 rupees a day). The Friday sermons of the local clergy convinced him that the US invasion of Afghanistan would be an attack by kuffar (infidels) on the sovereignty of Islam and Islamic civilisation. And being a Muslim, he was bound to fight it. When asked whether the local maulvi or his sons went to Afghanistan for jihad, Mustafa said that the maulvi had seven rough-and-tough sons. He himself was fat and glutton. Neither he nor any of his sons went for jihad. Mustafa is now convinced that the maulvi was a hypocrite.

Mustafa revealed that the Pakistanis received the most inhuman treatment at the Shibergan Jail in Mazare Sharif. They were allowed to have a bath once in two months. They were not allowed to pray. They were given only half a chapatti and that too not everyday. They were kept thirsty. When the thirst of one of the prisoners became unbearable, he was given water. He drank it but vomited because it was urine. The torture was meted out on a daily basis. At night, the soldiers stripped them, flogged their buttocks and back until blood oozed from their skin and then urinated on their bleeding body.

Mustafa did not regret the indescribably appalling agony at Shibergan. The treachery of the Taliban or Sufi Mohammad had not disappointed him. He went to Afghanistan to fight for Allah, not for them. He did not know his future plans but he was committed to teach India a lesson if it attacked Pakistan. My next destination was Lady Reading Hospital. The hospital administration had set up a separate ward in the basement for the militant prisoners. The place was comparatively less hot. I saw around 50 ailing detainees in the most pathetic condition suffering from health problems such as malnutrition, dysentery, Hepatitis B & C, tuberculosis, diarrhea, respiratory, urine and stool disorder, allergies, itching and fungal infection. Their bed-sheets were stained with blood and they lived in an unhygienic environment. Their unanimous complaint was, they had been moved from one jail to another-the hospital was as bad as Shibergan Jail. They were not provided medicines. They were not given good food. They were not attended in a humane manner. The hospital administration was biased against them because they were ‘mujahideen’. In their opinion, a Shia doctor, Dr Irfan, had masterminded these discriminations and biases. They lambasted him, declaring him a kafir (infidel) and wajibul qatl (deserved to be murdered).

My first question to the inflamed jihadis was, why did the Taliban desert them. Zahid Ahmed of Karachi assumed the role of their spokesman. He was a matriculate, 20, single and unemployed. He was associated with a madressah in Karachi. Jihad was his profession, although, he had received no formal military training. The power of faith motivated him for jihad and he went to Afghanistan. According to him, the Taliban did not cheat them. They were also held with the Pakistanis. When asked about the premature surrender of the Taliban at Kunduz, the jihadis said: “Nobody surrendered and withdrew from any territory. We had enough resources and ammunition to continue jihad in Kunduz. But Amirul Momineen (the head of all pious Muslims) Mullah Mohammad Omar did not give us the permission. He asked us to accept Dostum’s offer of an exit. We trusted him but he cheated us. He got us arrested instead of providing us an exit.”

Karim Ahmad, 15, resident of Okara, was in school when he went to Afghanistan. During the Friday prayers, he heard the maulvi saying that the US was about to attack Pakistan to chase the Taliban and thus Islam was in danger. His sermons inflamed a fire of hatred in his heart against the

Americans. He left the school and went to Afghanistan without his parents' permission. He said that the maulvi had two sons-one was a muezzan (the one who gives the prayer call) and the other was his class-fellow. None was moved by their father's sermon for jihad. He said he would like to sacrifice his life thousands of times for jihad. The Taliban fought with him. It is a misleading propaganda that they had fled or deceived them.

Nazir Ahmed Farooqi, resident of Rahimyar Khan, was a student of Madressah Jamiatul Ulema where he read Koran and Hadith. According to him, around 10,000 Taliban were held in captivity along with the Pakistani militants. About 7,000 were killed by the forces of Northern Alliance at various places and some 3,000 are still held in the Shibergan Jail.

But another jihadi Usman, 19, resident of Borewala, who was in a critical condition said that the Taliban did deceive them. They were selfish. They bargained with Dostum and took the good advantage of the exit-offer at midnight when everybody was sleeping. His words provoked the other jihadis. They started abusing him.

The jihadis flared up when they were reminded that jihad was not the act of killing Muslims by Muslims and that, that no jihad was going on in Afghanistan. It was a civil war for the lust of power. The Northern Alliance and the Pashtoon Taliban, both were Muslims. They strongly reacted to this question and said: "Don't ask such type of questions!"

Mohammad Afzal Jan, resident of Lodhran, Multan, 16, single, student of Madressah Panipati Usmani Saheb, tried to justify it saying: "Killing of the Northern Alliance was justified. They were Muslims, but enemies of Islam. They were hypocrites. They were rebels of Islam. Therefore, killing them was religiously correct. When asked whose edict it was, he said: "Ulemae Karam's (religious scholars'")."

When they were told that they had been released due to the personal efforts of General Pervez Musharraf and what they thought about him, they unanimously said: "Musharraf would be a saheb for others, not for us. We recognise him as bay-sharaf (honour-less). He is also an enemy of Islam. We seriously doubt on his being a Muslim. He is definitely a Qadiani! Had he been a true Muslim, he would not have renounced jihad and abandoned the Taliban. He has caused a colossal loss to Islam and the cause of jihad. We are back to Pakistan because it was written in our fate by Allah. We are only thankful to Allah, nobody else!"

Giving eyewitness account of Shibergan, the jihadis said: "Some 4,000 Pakistanis and thousands of Taliban were killed in the Shibergan Jail." Asif Khan, resident of Dera Ghazi Khan, 19, single, a madressah student said: "Some 30,000 mujahideen surrendered at Kunduz. We were packed in containers. There was no ventilation. When we reached Shibergan, only 2,000 were alive. 28,000 died of suffocation during the journey from Kunduz to Shibergan. Most of the mujahideen were martyred in Chardara during the journey from Kunduz to Shibergan. We, ourselves, picked up the wounded militant. When we reached Mazare Sharif, Dostum's army threw the wounded like bricks and buried all of them alive! His soldiers snatched everything from us-even our clothes. They also deprived us from azarband (rope used to tighten trousers) of our *shalwars* (trousers)."

Giving his personal account of the above incident, Mohammad Farid, resident of Rawalpindi, 23, single, unemployed, student of Madressah Al-Ashrafia said: “The Northern Alliance packed 300 mujahideen in one container. When we reached Shibergan, maximum five were alive in each container. The moment we were put in the Shibergan jail, Dostum’s army started torturing us. They tortured us from hot iron rods and chains. In the night, they would wake us up and try to molest us. Those who would refuse would be severely beaten. We were given a few pieces of bread. We were allowed to go to bathroom only once in 24 hours. They would allow us a bath after two months. They did not allow us to pray. We had small-sized Holy Koran. They threw and desecrated them in front of us.”

When asked, were they satisfied with the policies of the jihadi organisations, they said: “Absolutely! jihadi organisations are the saviours of Islam. Pakistan today exists on the map of the world only because of them and we are also in this country only because of their efforts.”

When asked, how many religious leaders sent their sons with them for jihad, the reply was: “None did so!”

When asked, why did they not think of waging jihad against social injustice, unemployment, exploitation, and evils prevailing in Pakistan they said: “We are mindful of it. We are at the moment under arrest. Let us come out. We are thirsty of the blood of those who are doing this. Let us first liberate Afghanistan and Kashmir then we will come to it!”

When asked what would they do after they are discharged from the hospital they said, “Our Kashmiri mothers, brothers, and sisters are calling us. We would go there to defend their honour and liberate Kashmir from the illegal occupation of the cunning and coward Hindus.”

Not a single jihadi had any sort of remorse or regret over going to Afghanistan. I met the parents and relatives of some of them outside the hospital. They all were proud of them. Sakina Bibi, mother of a jihadi said: “I can raise my head with pride and honour. My son is the ‘son of Islam’. If I had hundred sons, I would have sent all of them in Afghanistan!”

Fazal Dad, father of another jihadi said: “We are extremely thankful to General Musharraf for bringing our son back to us but this does not mean we will not send him for jihad again. Jihad cannot be stopped by announcing policies against it. Whenever the country or Islam will need him, my son will go for jihad.”

Affliction, torture and even disability could not extinguish these handful of jihadis’ passion for jihad. They were unable to apply mind. They had no idea who was Osama or Mullah Omar. They had just heard about them. One of the jihadis admitted that he was impressed with them because they had been glorified by the media.

The ignorant clergy is only a miniscule minority in Pakistan but its impact is greatly destructive and baleful on the naive minds of the poor and middle class masses. Its venomous sermons emitting through powerful loudspeakers, which have nothing to do with Islam, preach lessons of hatred. It propagates that people of a different school of thought within its own sect are infidels and to kill them is an Islamic act. To spread this propaganda in an organised and planned manner, it has

established seminaries in every nook and corner of the country under the cover of ‘free education and accommodation’ to the poor masses.

The real perpetrators of the jihadi phenomenon are left scot-free. If the jihadis are not educated about their own follies and the hypocrisy of the clergy and the religious leaders, if they are not reformed and engaged in healthy activities, and if they are not provided employment, they will revert to their old ‘occupation’ and fulfil their hobby of jihad by killing Shia doctors like Dr Irfan to achieve their share of hoor and heaven.

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