

Kashmir: Violence is not the Solution

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On October 30, 1993 some Kashmiri youths issued a death threat to me and announced a reward of Rupees Five lakhs for the killer. They also declared that Kashmiri suicide squad had already been dispatched to Delhi to carry out the threat.

I am neither angry with them nor have any hatred. In fact, I would like to emphasise that if my life can help stop the colossal destruction of life and property of Kashmiri Muslims, and resolve the problem once for all, I am willing to go to Srinagar to facilitate the task of these youths. But I know that my physical elimination will not end the cycle of death and destruction in the valley. I record here my perception of the situation and approach to finding a solution the long pending Kashmir dispute.

I am a devout Muslim and so are the Kashmiri youth demanding my blood. Yet there seems to be a difference in our perception of the situation prevailing in Kashmir. The difference arises primarily because we have different ways of looking at the problem. While they wish to see happening in Kashmir what they think is correct, I view it as “what is possible” in the given situation. I may also make it clear that my viewpoint is based on the teachings and life of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him).

In a sensitive and emotive issue like Kashmir, the Prophet (pbuh) taught us to adopt a pragmatic approach rather than an idealistic. For, any other path would lead to further destruction.

There is unanimity among Islamic scholars and Ulema that Islam is a complete way of life and provides solutions to all situations or problems. And one of the basic teachings of Islam is to give importance to means and not only to the end. Muslims are told to desist from taking a path, which may lead to destruction even though the goal may be legitimate. In other words, one is supposed to adopt a practical approach in certain situations.

The four-year-old armed struggle in Kashmir has not helped the cause of the people of the state. In fact, if the armed struggle continued for some more time, the people would lose whatever they have gained over the past years in terms of projection of their grievances. If we look at the present situation in Kashmir in the light of Islamic history, it would be difficult to avoid the conclusion that now Kashmiris should give up the path of violence, and try to sort of the problem through negotiations and other peaceful means. The situation obtaining in the valley requires a tactical shift to achieve a position of strength.

Besides entering into a meaningful dialogue with the Indian Government, the Kashmiri youth should also concentrate on educational uplift and economic betterment of the people. Because that would help build a prosperous future of the state.

History tells us that on many occasions Islamic forces had to make a tactical retreat. In the War of Muwattah, 3,000 Muslim soldiers were pitted against a two-lakh strong army of the enemies of Islam. Although only 12 Muslim soldiers had died in the War, the commander of the Islamic forces, Khalid-bin-Wahid, decided to withdraw from the battle field as he saw no point in going ahead with a War which was evidently difficult to win. When Wahid's army reached Madina from Muwattah, Muslims of Madina called their names and blackened their faces with mud. When the Prophet (pbuh) came to know of this, he expressed his anger at the people's behaviour and declared that the soldiers were not deserters, but pragmatists.

Similarly, if the Kashmiri youths today give up the path of confrontation, they would not be called cowards or deserters. The need for tactical retreat in the case of Kashmir is much more considering the magnitude to death and destruction. The Kashmiri youth must learn a lesson from the Islamic history and immediately respond to the Indian Government's offer for solving the complex Kashmir problem through negotiations.

To make my point more clear, I may also refer to the battles of Badr and Uhad, which were fought and won during the lifetime of the Prophet (pbuh). Although the importance of these battles can not be undermined, but the holy Quran gave place of pride to the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, which came about after negotiations with non Muslims. The treaty is described in Quran as 'Fathen-I-Mubeen' (the greatest victory).

War leads to destruction, while reconciliation brings peace. That is why the holy Quran says in sure-I-Al-Nisa: "Al-Salah-ul-Khair" (blessed is the path of reconciliation), and not Al-harab-ul-Khair (blessed is the war). An armed struggle is always followed by at least two disastrous consequences. First, it creates fissures among various groups involved in the armed struggle, often causing bloody street fights. Secondly, it destroys economy and brings misery to the people.

That is the lesson one draws from Afghanistan's recent past. The economy of this Muslim country has been ruined so thoroughly due to the on going armed confrontation there that, according to one estimate, its reconstruction would require US \$ 6,000 million. Who will provide such a huge amount?

It is clear from the above that in the present situation, Kashmiri youths must shun violence and try to sort out their long-pending problems through a meaningful dialogue with the Indian Government. If they do that, they will find many supporters in different parts of the country. I am ready to hold talks with the Kashmiri youths currently fighting a losing battle. The only pre-condition is that the talks should be held in the light of the teachings of the holy Quran and the prophet Mohammad (pbuh).