

Interview With An Afghan Militant

The Urdu weekly 'CHATTAN', published from Srinagar, Kashmir, carried in its August 2-8, 1993 issue an interview with Khan Muhammad, Amir (Chief) of Afghan militant organisation 'Harkatul Jehade Islami' in Kashmir. The following is an abridged version of the interview.

“Born in Sorro Bhai village (district Pakteeska) in Afghanistan, 35-year old Khan Muhammad comes from a feudal family. His mother-tongue is Pushtu, but he can converse in Urdu as well.

“In answer to a call by the Afghan ulema (clerics) to carry out a jihad against Russia, Khan Muhammad gave up his studies to join the armed struggle under the banner of the Harkatul Jehade Islami. His father and three elder brothers, after participating in the struggle, returned to their village. Khan Muhammad was, however, still engaged in the jihad.

“The Harkatul Jehade Islami is a well known fundamentalist group with its branches in more than 19 countries. Its leadership is in the hands of Muslim clerics. The objectives of the organisation include the struggle against repression subjected on Muslims the worldover. The organisation is presently active in Kashmir and Bosnia.

“Khan Muhammad, along with his colleagues, entered Kashmir valley on November 1, 1992, and presently heads the Harkatul Jehade Islami in Kashmir. He says, soon thousands of Afghan mujahideen will enter the valley. According to him, some Afghan commanders, including Nasrullah Langdiyal, have promised that they would definitely be coming to aid Muslims in the Kashmir valley. Political parties across the board in Afghanistan are unanimous on the need for jihad in Kashmir.

Q. What brings you here?

KM: Muslims the world over are one. Our organisation, that is Harkatul Jehade Islami, has made this fact its guiding principle in the struggle to free Muslims from tyranny. Our Muslim sisters in Kashmir valley are being raped and their houses being burnt down. As a Muslim it is our duty to fight against this.

Q. Is it true that you have come here at the behest of Pakistan?

KM: Such comments smack of India's frustration. We have come to Kashmir of our own accord. And the decision to support our brethren here was taken three years ago when we were still engaged in our war with the Soviets. Pakistan neither stopped us nor propelled us to go to Kashmir. In any case, we would not have given up our plan to come to the valley had Pakistan tried to prevent us.

Q. What is your strategy against the security forces in the valley?

KM: In cities and towns our friends attack Indian forces who, in retaliation, make the common man their target. The strategy, which we adopt, is quite opposed to this. Not only do we engage Indian forces in encounters, but also tend to draw them out of the cities towards the forests and mountains. This makes our task easier and the civil population also does not have to suffer at the hands of Indian forces.

Q. Do you find any difference between the Afghan and Kashmir situation?

KM: The militants in Kashmir lack patience and courage. Here, ammunition is also in short supply. In Afghanistan borders were open while here they are not. If the Mujahideen here could create fervour, courage and enthusiasm in their ranks, then India would be brought to the heel much faster than the Soviet Union.