

# Taliban's Terror-Jizya on Sikhs

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Pakistan is going through dangerous turmoil. The Taliban's capturing of Swat valley (April 2009) and other parts of Pakistan are accompanied by the news of their atrocities in the region, which not only include the brutal killings of innocent citizens, mostly Muslims, on the ground of their belonging to different sub-sect of Islam, but also there has been imposition of Jizya, on non Muslims, Sikhs. While many Muslims have been killed and abducted many on various flimsy grounds, many a Sikhs have fled from the area. The failure to pay the full Jizya has caused Sikhs dear, while some of them have been kidnapped and others' households-properties have been confiscated. Taliban's logic is that they are imposing this as per the tenets of Islam.

What is the place of Jizya in Islam and is it relevant today? There is a mention of Jizya in Koran, the tax levied on non Muslims, in the conquered territories. Interestingly there was no such tax in Medina where Prophet lived for long years. The logic of Jizya on non Muslims in the conquered areas was that the non Muslims are to be exempted from military services, they are under the protection of the rule of Muslims, so this tax. It was a negotiable tax to be paid at the end of the year; it was levied only on the earning population in exchange for state protection. There was the parallel tax, Zakat on Muslims, which in many cases was more than the Jizya. There are instances when the Jizya levied by Muslim conquerors on non Muslim population turned out to be lower than the earlier taxation. It was more than clear that Jizya is not amongst eternal norms of Islam, it is something which has to be decided on social and political circumstances of the place and time.

We see that in later times with emergence of different political systems, Jizya was not much heard of. In India some Mughal rulers imposed this on Non Muslims with the similar intention. The aim of this was neither to punish the subjects nor to convert them. Mischievously the communal historiography in India tries to project that Aurangzeb and some other Muslim rulers imposed this as a means to convert the people. This argument does not hold any water. If Jizya was dished out as a threat to make people to convert to Islam than with conversion one will have to pay Zakat, which is no less. But any way the communal forces have made a good use of this to project the Muslim rulers in bad light and to demonize Muslims in current times.

Taliban is one of the most retrograde tendencies of Islam, bordering on insanity. Its action of atrocities on Women, on other Muslims is most reprehensible. Jizya on Sikhs is the latest in the series of such barbaric acts. If we go slightly back in time we see that Taliban was also responsible for destruction Buddha statues in Bamiyan. Who are Taliban and do they represent Islam?

Taliban has to be seen as a part of the politics in the name of religion, based on extremist Islamic streams, emerging in the oil rich zone, in countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait e.g., where the rulers have been making merry by playing hand maiden to the US designs of control on the oil wealth of the region. They have used Wahabi-Salafi, and other retrograde versions of Islam to keep their population subjugated and to ward off the democratic transformation of society. Their export of these fanatic versions to other countries got support in the areas at a time when United States was scheming to fight the occupation of Soviet troops by Russian armies.

The goal of US policy was to fight the Russian army by using the Asian Muslim youth. They achieved this by picking up meanings of Kafir and Jihad from these retrograde versions of Islam, where by the original meanings and the context is sacrificed, and Kafir comes to stand for every non Muslim and Jihad stands for killing the Kafirs. The systematic syllabus to train and indoctrinate the Muslim youth was developed in the strategy rooms of Washington and

implemented in the specially opened Madrassas in Pakistan. It is the students of these Madrassas who were the soldiers for Al Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden. Osama was richly funded by US, through CIA and lot of this money was raised by encouraging the opium trade. While a decade ago this might have been a revelation today all this has come out through various scholarly researches. Even Asif Ali Zardari confessed so much in his New York Times article a couple of months ago, the article which was reproduced by many major papers in India.

Osama not only received the monetary aid he also received the armaments in huge quantities, with the help of which he defeated the Russian armies. With the power vacuum coming up in Afghanistan, the less known Taliban, duly supported by US came up to be the major force in Afghanistan, later to be undermined after the Post 9/11 US invasion of Afghanistan. They resurfaced again with time. This cancer sowed by the US to fulfill its oil thirst survived the invasion and is currently tormenting the region, more particularly the Pakistan society. Hillary Clinton conceded as much when she said lot of the problems in the area are outcome of US policy in the region.

One should not jump to demonize Islam by the actions of Taliban or Al Qaeda. Many a rulers have used the identity of religion for expansion of their empires, to launch brutal wars, Crusades, Jihads, and Dharmyudhas. The beneficiary of this version of 'religion at the service of rulers', is Kings and the clergy, while average people suffer. The common theme of use of religion in politics is that such a use, nay abuse, of religion revolves around the identity related things of that religion and not to the morality of the religion. And Taliban or Al Qaeda are not alone in this category, there are others from other religions who commit similar atrocities on people of other religions, in the name of their religion. Religion is not an abstract phenomenon as such. On one hand it reflects the social and political reality and on the other shapes the same forces. There are different streams in every religion, depending on which social reality it reflects.

One fully stands with the Sikh community in condemning the brutality of Taliban's, one also stands with the leaders of Indian Muslim community who have whole heartedly condemned this act of Taliban. The social and religious leaders of Indian Muslim community in their joint statement have not only condemned this act of Taliban they also point out that Jizya has no place in modern World. As the region in the neighborhood of India has been infested with the poisonous seeds of Al Qaeda and Taliban, one must recall the dangerous role played by the US Empire and local collaborators the Pakistan army in planintng this problem in the region. Is it not its moral obligation that US compensates the region for the mess it has created here? Is it not time that United Nations ensures the preservation of Human rights of those living in this area? The Indian Muslim leaders have already condemned the Taliban-Al Qaeda atrocities. The fanatics wearing the garb of Islam must be dealt with firmly and human rights of all must be upheld to the fullest extent.

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