

The Mosque of Mischief

As the bizarre episodes related to the Red Mosque - Lal Masjid - in Islamabad were unfolding and the ever-wavering stand of General Musharraf (or is it President Musharraf?) came to the fore, one couldn't but wonder, what in God's name took the Pakistani authorities so long to shackle Abdul Aziz - the self-styled phony interpreter and 'imposer' of Islamic Shari'a. And, what a shameful exit indeed it was at the end of his defiant fame of past few months? Come to think of it, what could be more humiliating than the poor paper tiger (Ghazi (fighter), eh?) resorting to donning a Talibani Burqa! But as we know, every traitor and false prophet has met a fate quite similar to this for times known to the mankind.

Let me get this straight. Here was an ignorant and illiterate Mullah bossing over equally stupid teenage girls and boys and mysteriously arming his bandit clan with AK-47, machine guns, rocket launchers and gasoline bombs and what not, just in case. But what astounded me most was the sheer zombie-like stupidity of the Pakistani public at large who watched in death-like silence the atrocities committed in the name of Islam as weeks and months dragged by. I guess the fervor of ever-growing Talibanism is not confined to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border alone anymore. Instead of playing the comical charade of placating and threatening, only if the sensible elements of the so-called Islamic Republic of Pakistan had looked just once at the Qur'anic injunction, they would have found an uncanny similitude to the Red Mosque episode during the time of Prophet Muhammad himself. Hence, they would have come across the solution as well to this thorny problem. They could have thus saved the world of Islam yet another episode of sordid embarrassment that came at the heel of the 'terror by doctors' plot in London and Glasgow. Talk about icing on the cake!

Qur'an gives an amazingly descriptive narration of the plotting and planning of the evil schemes by the hypocrites of Madinah. It beautifully wraps the events encompassing the process of erection and destruction of *Masjid Dirar* (aptly called the mosque of mischief) in surah At-Taubah - the Repentance (verses 107-110).

When the hypocrites in Madinah built a mosque separate from Prophet's, God immediately proclaimed its illegitimacy in Qur'an saying that, "the mosque that has been built on the basis of piety and God's pleasure is not the same as the 'mosque of mischief' built with the intent of causing harm, disbelief and division among the believers; it is an outpost for those who warred against God and His messenger. The hypocrites have laid foundation of this building on an undetermined brink of a precipice ready to crumble down, so that it crumbled to pieces into the Fire of Hell".

God further says: “The building which they built will never cease to be a cause of doubt (in their hearts) and hypocrisy. Because of this awful action that they committed, they inherited hypocrisy in their hearts, just as those who worshipped the calf were inclined to adoring it”.

The Prophet was further commanded: “Never stand you therein. Verily, the mosque whose foundation was laid from the first day on piety is more worthy”. In the holy month of Ramadan in the year 1 AH, he was ordered that this mosque be destroyed. In an authentic narration, Jabir bin `Abdullah said, “I saw smoke rising up from the mosque that was built to cause harm (*Masjid Dirar*) during the time of the Messenger of God”.

The lessons to be learned from these fine verses are clear and unambiguous and, so are their implications. An organization, a structure, a movement or anything that resembles an embodiment of the cause of discord and disharmony in a Muslim community or elsewhere on this earth, should not be allowed to exist. By extension, the elements whose irresponsible intentions and actions are doing harm to Islam by their narrow interpretations of the Qur’anic teachings and those of the Prophet Mohammed and his companions must be stopped at any cost. For once Muslims should be united and vociferous against the rising tide of blind fundamentalism that seems to have given a free reign to every bearded and turbaned amidst them to issue a decree at their own whims.

If Muslims feel the need to get agitated and enraged by the offensive writings of Salman Rushdie or deprecating cartoons of Prophet Mohammed in Dutch newspapers, they should also cultivate the sensitivity and find the nerve in their religious anatomy to burn the effigy of Bin Laden, Al-Zawahiri, Al-Zarqawi, Ghazi and their likes, whose crimes are no less heinous - in fact, more, because they are using Islam's name to inflict terror, pain and death on the rest of humanity!

Now, more than ever, it is vital for Muslims to redefine the militarist guidance contained in the holy works within the larger social framework and in the broader context with crystal clarity. What is more important, to care about your neighbor who may happen to be a non-Muslim or even an atheist, or to hate him just because God destined him to be so? We all know the answer, but as Muslims we must firmly believe and declare that the latter has NO place in any of the doctrines of Islamic faith for a broad Muslim community. Our first and foremost role ought to be to bring this interpretation to all reaches of the Muslim community - and beyond. Muslim organizations in the UK are taking full page advertisements in leading newspapers to denounce last week’s terror plots. I urge the Muslim-American communities to follow the suit and condemn Al-Qaeda and all that it ‘misrepresents’ in the name of Islam. Neither the religion of Islam nor the Muslims are anybody’s inheritance. It’s time to tell Bin Laden: “Get off my religion!”

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