

EXPLORING FACTORS OF TERRORISM: SUFI'S PERSPECTIVES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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ABSTRACT : *The purpose of this research study was to focus on exploring the factors of terrorism while reviewing the literature focusing on the basic ideology of the Sufism, its true spirit, and basic foundations. The linkage of war against terrorism is also highlighted and the Sufi ideology as a remedy to terrorism has been suggested. The factors have been cultivated while discussing the issues with devotees, visitors and Shrine managers by using the qualitative tools and focusing (on the case study method) on the shrine of Hazrat Syed Sakhi Mehmood Badshah. The focus group discussions at the study locale provided an insight into Sufi's perspectives towards the changing trends in the society towards peace, tolerance and harmony majorly influenced by terrorism and suicide attacks.*

Key Words: Terrorism and Sufism, Tasawwuf, Shariat,

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism impairs the overall development of nation, undermines people's spiritual, social and material well-being. Thus compromises human dignity and creates a climate of fear and violence that erodes the quality of life. Terrorism often victimize large segments of the society and create a climate of fear and insecurity that impairs the quality of human life, impedes harmonious development, and disrupts public peace and tranquility. Weinberg and Eubank (2006) opined that terrorism could be a nationalist or anti nationalist motives or hatred anger or grievances raised against American people and American government's policy which was outcome of the world trade centre attacks [1].

Hoffman (2006) revealed that how terrorism and religion shares a long history. Terrorism is actually a tool to force an ideology. Terrorism has been the part of secular schools and also be the part of religious schools. Religion encourages eternal life and the system of rewards with it. This can be more motivated with the religious justification in ally to religious values. Secular terrorists usually stand against the flaw in the system. Author Hoffman debates that religion as a base for selecting the way of terrorism can be more brutal as it alienates everyone else who is not inside that religion. Secular terrorism is also worth hating, but it usually stands at more micro level [2].

Covering the subject how Pakistan became the target of suicide attacks are also mentioned in the book of Butt and Ellahi (2010), as Hakimullah Masud stated that we are targeting Pakistan as they are coalition with America and they warned that they are in power to take over Peshawar, Hangu and even Islamabad [3].

Despite some very valuable researchers like Syed Nasr, Lings, Haeri, Patrick Hamilton, Sadia Dehlvi, Carl Ernst, Shaykh Fdahlalla Haeri, the Sufism in context of war against terror in Pakistan and its response affects the economic and cultural development, is still an area which that has not been given much attention in research. This research aimed at studying how Sufism has evolved specifically over the last few years and the cultural affects due to the ideological shift for war against terrorism in Pakistan.

In Arabic and Persian, there are many terms for Muslim mystics with distinct and sometime contradictory meanings,

all of which are commonly known as the word Sufism [4] which embraces the philosophy and practices in Islam which aim at direct communion between God and Man [5]. The traditional Sufi terminology defines it as the Science of certainty [6].

Sufism is an impossible task to exactly define but it is usually known as *Tasawwuf*. *Shariat* talks more about external practices and more like extrinsic matters and virtues of the religion. Sufism explores the intrinsic virtues and human devotion internally for the Almighty. *Shariat* and Sufism encompass gratitude and devotion to the Almighty. While *Shariat* enforces *Mazhab* which is the ritual part of Islam, Sufism works over *Deen* (Religion) which is like essence [7]. Various newspaper and information from news channel suggests that the phenomenon of suicide bombing is new in Pakistan, and Since November 6, 2002 the fatalities have crossed 32,102. During his research he also discovered that the young and innocent fall prey due to negative influence/motivation by Maulvi so called Ulemas mainly through Madrassas, lack of proper education in tribal areas, inaccessibility of the people to TV/Radio in the remote areas, no business opportunities and poor living conditions and lack of recreational activities. Therefore he suggested in the research that Integration, establishment of Schools, Media policy, Youth program, business opportunities are important tools to reduce extremism and terrorism, he also forced that the true version of Islam through renowned scholars should be promoted [8].

Sufism, is a term which is notoriously difficult to be defined, it reflects the form taken by Western scholarly attempts to order and understand the complexities of Islam and the Muslim world, as much as it points the realities the thought processes, ritual practices, political strategies and modes of engagement, with the wider world of those Muslims who are tempted to define reform minded or Sufi. Sufism has also been defined as Islam's mystical strain, Sufi thought places greater emphasis on the possibility of their being lived and experienced relationship between the believer and the God. However the term in contrast is reformism, this refers to the projects which seek to bring Muslim and practices closer to the Islamic doctrinal perceptions [9].

He further stated that the distinction between Sufism and reform minded Islam also inform much writing on Pakistan. Pakistan's city are home to some of the most vibrant Sufi shrines in the Muslim world and their annual gatherings that celebrate the death of the saint in whose name these are founded draw thousands of devotees, and increasingly, western journalists. At the same time Pakistani madrasas, or religious seminaries, form one of the most important networks for the transmission of the reform-minded forms of Islamic thoughts and learning in the world today. A number of Islam specialists have noticed, distinguishing between the different ways of being Muslims as being good or bad ignores the complexity of historical and ongoing interaction between reform-minded and Sufi derived from the Muslim thoughts and identity [9].

Terrorism was existing in all parts of Asia even before the event of 9/11. On the other hand, explained the understanding toward global terrorism crisis and identifies Taliban as the fanatic fundamentalists' sect of Muslim who stand responsible for it. Western societies assume all Muslims to be cruel, hard or tyrants. There is another mild and peaceful sect in Muslims who are Sufi, who spread the world of peace, Wisdom and humanity. As message of Sufism is love, harmony and beauty. They are open target too as they encourage practices of peace and Taliban assume it to be against the orthodox practices and stand against them [10].

A new term in 2009 of virtual trauma that the event of 9/11 left on the lives of millions not in America but also worldwide. International scenario changed, when twin towers turned into debris when planed faced their nose with the tall standing buildings [11]. The attacks of 9/11 were the point which brought them to brink and forced them to stand up against the acts of terrorism and the groups who are launching it [12]. Whereas, [Chossudovsky \(2005\)](#) explained more depth of the war, as it was not only a barbaric war but also a war which will include strategic and monetary issues also. It was to take place not on their borders but in central Asia. Going out of the warm territory need of more allies and of extra finances were also required [13].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present qualitative study has been designed to focus on exploring the Sufi ideology as an energetic force to reduce terrorism. The case study was conducted on the shrine of Hazrat Syed Sakhi Mehmood Badshah situated in the heart of Islamabad (name as Aabpara). Under the study, four focus group discussions were conducted with the devotees, visitors and Auqaf managers at the shrine. The qualitative findings were then transcribed thematically under the major findings, and are explained in the discussion of the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the FGDs condensed perception towards terrorism was explored under four factors, the factors behind terrorism has been discovered as: Global Economic Pressures, where a group of respondents believe that the rolling storm of terrorism is due to the vast pressures due to global economic trends, they shared that the poverty triggers the masses to be exploited and it's unfortunate where suicide bombers give away their life, the same set of respondent also believe that

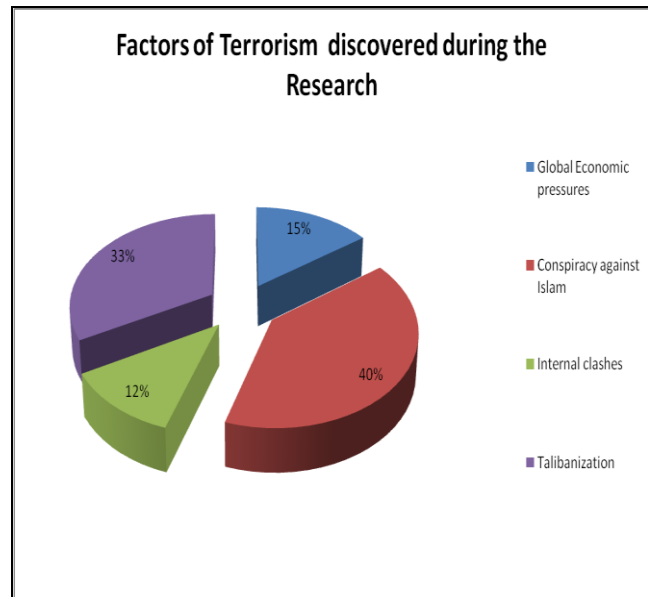


Figure.1: Factor of Terrorism

poverty also put barriers toward formal education hence people get molded and brain washed. On the other hand, a group of respondents consider terrorism a by-product of long planted conspiracy against Islam and focuses to weaken the ideology of Islam, the respondents shared their consent that super powers along with Jewish lobbying playing a game to dissolve the masses and energies of Muslim societies and countries into reactive beings who are charged with hatred and to kill and destroy their own people. The respondents also shared that this biased approach of suppressing Islam is so visible and the foreign involvement is the key element to foster terrorism in Pakistan.

Another set of respondent blames the internal clashes between the sects of Islam as the major factor of terrorism, they explained that these clashes creates gaps at larger level and hence hatred by both ends try to exercise it through militancy, a number of political giants also fertilizes their growth by associating with respective cause. The last group shared that the era of Talibanization has left its bitter seeds where the funded militant Taliban are no more performing Jihad or they are no more part of the Jihad movements, the respondents explained that those madrasas which were used to train and promote such militants are now getting consumed in house and targeting the mosques and shrines over the claim of calling themselves right and custodians of the ideology of Islam and the opponents as pagans and blasphemous.

Most of the respondents shared that the terrorism has increased in past five years, they explained that number of peaceful rituals and old ceremonies have been targeted and the nation have lost number of people over the name of targeted killing and suicide bombings. Number of respondents does admit the necessary requirement of using the commercial tools to protect the legacy and philosophy of Sufism, most of the respondents consider that Sufism has been commercialized due to a number of reasons and the Media is playing a major role both in positive and negative ways to introduce and spreading the Ideology of Sufism. The respondents do consider the reality of using the modern tools

and arenas to defend their ideology towards certain happenings and especially terrorism.

CONCLUSION

Sufism has been practiced in many ways keeping the cultural sensitivity of the respective geography and values of the societies around the world, the sub continent has always been called as the land of mysticism where the unity and harmony was flourished with the help of Sufi saints and mystics, people from all walks of life present their tributes to the shrines of the saints in one way or another hence a colorful yet peaceful culture remains intact. Most of the respondents feel alarmingly alert towards the terrorist activities and attacks in different parts of Pakistan especially the shrines, they consider a new wave of terrorism as the most brutal and violent where it attacks the symbols of peace, culture and harmony. The attack at different shrines in Pakistan including the shrine of Hazrat Sakhi Mehmood is the worst form of terrorism as one respondent described it as Gunnah e Azeem (Blasphemy).

One of the respondent who is also a student at a university shares the fear of losing the peaceful hubs known as the shrines, he explained that it is of utmost importance to generate powerful scholars and intellectuals to make masses grow in a peaceful and healthy way. Most of the respondents believe firmly in reducing terrorism through conducting constructive ideological debates and discussion, they also shared that it is important to enrich the minds of upcoming generations with equipments of self actualization and self awareness which is nothing but Sufism, the respondents explains that the best practices in the society along with education can help people to engage in positive direction. A respondent shared that according to "Hazrat Sultan ul Hind Moin ud Deen Chishti Ajmeri r.a (a great Sufi saint of Indo-Pak and founder of Chishti school of thought in Sufism) said the best practice in Islam is to feed the powers and needy and to give your ears and hearts to the most wrecked people around you", the respondent further explained that this above mentioned quote is the philosophy and ideology, and a core driving force yet to be conceived to fight Sufism.

Government should create a monitoring cell with the help of voluntary committees at the shrine to maintain a vigilant approach towards the literature distributed and pasted on the walls and income generated.

A National conference on Sufism should be called once a year comprising scholars and upcoming research students to lead an open forum to protect the actual legacy of the teachings and values of Sufism.

Religious programs on different Media channels should be regulated in a responsible manner, most of the respondents argued that Sufism has been project in past 05 years or so as dancing, singing, poetry and philosophy of aesthetics, rather it is very different when it comes to the teachings and rituals of Sufism.

Terrorism is now hitting the most peaceful hubs of Pakistan known as the shrine of Saints, the Media should run a responsible campaign which can be a short message by different scholars over the confusions drawn in the name of religion, culture and practices.

The Education ministry should trickle down a peaceful projection of the growth of Islam both culturally and geographically.

Islamabad being the capital of Pakistan, should device a mechanism to resume the Yearly Urs of the great saints of Hazrat Syed Sakhi Mehmood badshah and Hazrat Bari Imam. The true essence of tolerance, justice and the actual pluralistic nature of Islam should be incorporated in the core syllabus at school, college and university levels, plus a manual should be generated to design and train the civil society and government servants to achieve a sensible and responsible approach to shun the prejudice within the society.

A bench of scholars should promote a neutral set of information by monitoring different media channels and advise on monthly basis to change the thinking trends and patterns of the society.

Teachers at different levels should be trained by engaging the professionals from civil societies to strengthen the wisdom based practices and melting down the rigid behavior which help youth fall prey for terrorists.

The Sufi teachings should be promoted at all levels by using published materials and also through constructive and interactive programs focusing on university students to create the champions of the change.

The essence of Sufism is No discrimination, pacific settlement of the disputes, support the deprived and poor and disadvantaged, hence promote a model Muslim and citizen.

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