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The unholy Madrasas of Pakistan

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The Persian word ‘*Madrasa*’ literally stands for a school where education is imparted. Conventionally, the religious education related to the Islam has been provided in madrasas. But increasingly, these madrasas across the world are incorporating modern education in their curriculum, along with the traditional Islamic teachings. In Indian state of West Bengal, there are many such madrasas where poor children belonging to all religions, who cannot afford modern education, are admitted. Apart from Urdu, the children here are taught Hindi, General Knowledge, History, Science, Social Studies, and Computers. Indian madrasas seem to be catching up with the times.

But in Pakistan, which was carved out of India in 1947 in the name of Islam, the condition of madrasas is deteriorating day by day. Most of them are said to be imparting training and education based on the Taliban ideology. Apart from instilling extremism, students are indoctrinated against other religions and brainwashed to declare a war on the people of other communities. In these madrasas, children are taught the wrong definition of ‘*Jihad*’, and encouraged to become suicide bombs. They are told that dying while pursuing ‘*Jihad*’ will secure them a place in ‘*heaven*.’ This spreading of venom has led to the massacre of thousands of innocents in AfPak region and around the world. Their major targets have been crowded places like markets, mausoleums, army establishments, police training centres etc in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Those calling themselves Muslims have ended up killing the maximum number of innocent Muslims.

It is not India or any other ‘enemy’ which levels such charges at Pakistan. News reports arising out of Pakistan are themselves a proof of how these unholy madrasas are expanding their reach among the common Pakistanis. Recently, Pakistani security forces liberated 55 students in

a raid at a madrasa in Karachi. The chief priest of madrasa escaped. These students between 8 to 25 years of age were kept as hostages in a basement by the madrasa management in connivance with the Taliban terrorists. Many of them were tied with chains. The released boys have told that they were being trained for carrying out suicide attacks. They were told to be ready for “war.” Whoever would refuse to follow their instructions, he was not given food, beaten up and hanged with ropes in his feet. Most of these students in this “*Jail madrasa*” belong to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The biggest evidence of Pakistani madrasas being used as terrorists’ nurseries came into light in 2007 when Pakistani Army, on the orders of the then President General Pervez Musharraf, carried out a big operation at Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in Islamabad. A huge cache of arms and explosives was recovered in this commando operation. Inside, the troops had to face heavy resistance; retaliation to which left 100 dead including so-called students (terrorists), passersby, and 11 security men. Instead of laying his life for “heaven”, the chief priest of the mosque preferred trying to escape along with the women by hiding himself under Burqa (veil). But the commandoes caught this opportunist ‘*Jihadi*.’

It is very unfortunate that while the madrasas in Pakistan are used as a centre to spread hatred, terror, extremism and animosity; at the same time, the products of this unholy nexus are targeting the modern education and institutions imparting modern and scientific education. The same mindset is responsible for the demolition of over 500 schools in last five years in Pakistan. A few months ago, the Taliban blew up a boys’ school near Islamabad. Such actions show that these Goths have nothing to do with things like development, modernity, peace, prosperity and harmony.

Early this year in June, I received a press note from Islamabad based ‘Youth of Parachinar.’ It was very head rending. The restive city of Parachinar is situated 290-kms West of Islamabad. Bordering Tora Bora cave complex, it is the capital of Kurram agency in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. In order to get modern education, a large number of students from this region come to study in the schools of the Capital Islamabad and stay in hostels there. The guardians of many of them have been killed by the Taliban. Due to ongoing fight between Pakistan Army and the Taliban, the route to Parachinar had been closed. Therefore, these children were not able to go back homes during vacations.

Dozens of such students protested before the office of National press club, Islamabad. These innocent victims of Taliban’s oppression were trying to tell their miserable stories by holding banners and placards. Irshad Ahmed, a fifth class student, said, “I don’t know why they (terrorists) killed my parents.” Now, he’s finding it difficult to even manage his school fees. Similarly, according to seventh grader Muzammil Hussein, “Taliban are so bad. They kill the children. Don’t they have their own kids?” These children, in their appeal to the President Zardari, Prime Minister Gilani, Army Chief General Kayani, and Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary, have pleaded for help. This situation is suffice to understand that while the madrasas are getting murky; on the other hand, an attempt is being made to kill the most essential modern education. Hence, Pakistan’s future can be easily foreboded.