

COMMENT

Living with Religious Terrorism

ALL GREAT RELIGIONS OF THE world teach peace and tolerance. They strictly forbid killing of innocent people, inequality, injustice, intolerance and other bad things. Religion could be used to advance brotherhood, promote tolerance and build bridges of friendship and understanding.

However people with evil designs use religion to advance their political, regional and communal agenda. They use religion to justify violence, killing and to spread extremism and hatred.

At times terrorism and violence is committed to advance various agendas, which could be to advance political agenda, regional agenda or sectarian agenda. But religious terrorism has many dimensions. It has profound religious manifestations, and is generally used to motivate people to advance political, regional and imperialist agendas under the cover of religion.

All terrorists, no matter what cover they use, aim to terrorise people or groups of people to advance their agenda. They always look for reason to justify their acts, and for this purpose they have other organisations and sympathisers to promote their cause or defend their actions in public. Religion or ethnic issues are employed to conceal political goals and to generate support and to silence opposition.

Religious terrorism has become very serious threat to societies in many countries; and if it is not checked this could lead to wars between countries, as it nearly did between India and Pakistan after the Mumbai carnage.

Who would know better than the people of Jammu and Kashmir who have been victims of religious terrorism since 1947? Kashmiris were victims of unprovoked aggression in 1947, which was organised by the government of Pakistan. The uncivilised tribesmen from North-West Frontier were sent to capture Kashmir in the name of *Jihad*. These tribesmen killed innocent people of Jammu and Kashmir, raped women, looted and plundered the territory of the State.

In this naked aggression tens of thousands of innocent people were killed, thousands of women were raped, kidnapped and brought to tribal areas. Some of these unfortunate women were sold and others were forced to change their religion.

This religious terrorism has not ended, at least not in the region of South Asia. With time sponsors of this new brand of terrorism have formulated new strategies and new tactics. They use Muslim youths, especially uneducated and impoverished youths from various sections of the society, brain wash them and use them to advance their political, strategic and ideological designs.

The terrorism, whether it is in form of religious terrorism or any other form, has behaved like Frankenstein Monster. It has become out of control and in some respects has turned against its creators. Impression is being given that now Pakistan wants to eradicate terrorism in all its manifestations.

That is not the whole truth. Those who sponsor terrorism are divided over this issue. Some sections of the establishment are still of the view that some variety of terrorists are their national asset and they can be successfully utilised against India. They could be used to destabilise and harass other countries; and advance their political and strategic policies. *[contributed]*