

## THE GIFT OF AL-QAEDA AND THE TALIBAN

• By Dr. M.N. Buch

Just a few days ago a historic event happened which was reported, but whose true import does not seem to have fully sunk in. The Ulema of Dar-Ul-Uloom Deoband and Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Hind met at Deoband and the end of the conclave issued a statement, the purport of which is that India is a bouquet of many flowers, Kashmir is a part of this bouquet and is an integral part of India, the problem of Kashmir cannot be an excuse for separatism and the separatists were creating unnecessary problems for Muslims in India. This was not only a full-throated reiteration of our position on Kashmir but it went further than any statement hitherto issued by government. By this one resolution the religious leaders of the Muslim community have undone the wounds of the partition. These religious leaders have virtually said that India is the home of Muslims, in fact the largest Muslim community in the world after Indonesia and that not only is India the home of Muslims but it is where they are safe, secure, prosperous and happy. Any praise of the brave stand of the Ulema would be faint, any salute offered to them would be inadequate because they have justified the decision taken by the people of India at the time of partition that India would be a secular polity in which every race, every religion and every sect would be an equal partner. Sixty-three years after independence Dar-Ul-Uloom-Deoband has proved that India is truly a country of unity in diversity. I bow my head to these wise men.

The Deoband statement has to be read in the context of the recent judgement on Ayodhya. If Ram existed then certainly Ayodhya was both his birthplace and capital of his kingdom. His father, Dashrath ruled from here, as did his brother Bharat. To that extent the whole of Ayodhya is Ram Janmabhoomi. Even the Muslims recognise this. The Ayodhya judgement of the Allahabad High Court has accepted the site of the Mir Baqi (Babri) Masjid as a possible birthplace of Ram. The High Court has also accepted that the Muslims, too, have a right at least over the part of the land and, therefore, the disputed site has been distributed in equal portions to three claimants, including the Muslims. This judgement has not aroused any communal passions and whereas some of the parties to the dispute are contemplating an appeal before the Supreme Court, even the most extreme Hindu and Muslim groups have reacted to the judgement with a sense of responsibility. In other words, there is an environment in which instead of being at each other's throats the two major communities, Hindus and Muslims, are prepared to eschew the path of violence and instead have recourse to law. The statement issued from Deoband on Kashmir has to be read in this context because it does augur well for a possible solution of the Ayodhya problem in which the religious sentiments of both Hindus and Muslims are taken care of to the satisfaction of both communities.

Purely as an aside there are some comments on Ayodhya which bear telling. With great respect to the Allahabad High Court there is an alternative judgement which could have been given. It would have to start with the events of the night of 21<sup>st</sup> December 1949. The Babri Masjid was never a particularly famous mosque and it is strange fact that within its compound was located the Ram Chabutra or platform measuring 17feet in length and 12 feet in breadth. There were no idols inside the mosque, but on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1949 idols were smuggled into the mosque and installed under the dome in the dead of the night. This was done with the full connivance of K.K. Nayyar, District Magistrate, Faizabad who should have used section 144 Cr. P. C. to prohibit this act and to remove the idols back to their original spot. Lest Muslims be elated by this suggestion let it be on record that the Babri Masjid itself had not been used for worship for over two hundred years by orders of the Nawab of Oudh, who

had prohibited worship because there was a dispute between Shias and Sunnis on the ownership of the mosque. All land is held from the State and when the purpose for which it was meant to be used is no longer fulfilled, the land would revert to the State. If it is not a place of worship then neither the Sunni nor the Shia Wakf Boards had any extent title to it and the property was intestate. All intestate property automatically vests in the State, which means that it would be in order for the Hon'ble Court to rule that the land belongs to the State and no party has any right over it. May be this would be in the best interest of Ayodhya.

Why did I start by referring to the Taliban and Al Qaeda in the title of this paper? There is a world view, especially that of the West, that Islam and Muslims preach and practise extremism. This has led to great mutual suspicion and in the western world many people look upon all Muslims as fundamentalist. The acts of terror perpetrated by organisations such as Taliban, Al Qaeda, L-e-T, etc., have all reinforced the image of orthodox fundamentalist Islam whose main weapon is violence expressed through acts of terrorism. When put into correct focus it is not the western world which is the main victim of such terrorism. Hitherto the Jihadis have largely targeted countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Muslim dominated Kashmir, etc., all of them either Islamic countries or a State of the Indian Union with a Muslim majority. The victims are largely Muslims. What sort of Jihad is this which pits Muslim vs. Muslim? This is not Jihad, this is the aimless, lunatic terrorism of criminal organisations. In this scenario India emerges as an island of sanity and peace, in which over 150 million Muslims are safe, secure and assured of a share in the emerging prosperity of the nation. This makes India a true home of the Islam which was revealed by Allah to his Prophet, Mohammed. Salalah-Waleh--Salalam. This is the triumph of Indian secularism because it has proved that any religion, any society can only prosper in a secular environment. For this we have Al Qaeda and the Taliban to thank.

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