

Scenario 34

PAN-ISLAMISM IN PAK ARMY-II:

BRIG ALI'S STORY:

In Pakistan, Brig Ali Khan's arrest on 6th May 2011 under specific approval of COAS Gen Ashfaq Kayani speaks the deep roots of 'fundamentalism' still having confused and turbulent trends in the Pakistan Army. The officer was posted in the GHQ Rawalpindi since two years. He was arrested on the allegations of keeping contacts with *Hizbut Tehreer* (HT) which is allegedly known for having discrete links with MI5, an official intelligence unit of the United Kingdom. When HT was contacted by the media for comments they said that:

"Our policy is not to confirm or deny such news and expect material support from sincere officers to establish Khalafah".

Asif Salahuddin, spokesman for HT told the media that:

'We normally don't react on such stories and this is the only reaction which can clear our position in regards to Brigadier Ali Khan. Further reaction would be released with the developments. We are organizing a meeting in London on 26th June 2011 and invite all sincere and dedicated Muslims to join us'.

Brig Ali's wife told the media that: *"Allegations are fabricated, every General knows my husband. He was arrested to gratify America and was to retire next month".*

The Pakistan Army's spokesman Maj Gen Athar Abbas had also told that following the arrest of Brig Ali Khan, four army majors were questioned in the said context. Gen Athar, the Chief of the ISPR, had categorically narrated before the media that Brig Ali Khan had never been associated with Al Qaeda or Taliban or any other *Mujahideen* type group. However, he remained under surveillance of the ISI and Military Intelligence (MI) for about six months and in their joint operation he was finally picked up from outside his residence. The intelligence agencies of army reportedly launched a check on him after some suspicious people were found frequently visiting his home. The call records of his mobile phone had confirmed the said suspicions and the officer was found linked to a contingent of militants having direct ties with the American CIA, most probably through HT allegedly a front organization of MI5 of England.

HT is active in many Muslim countries and in Britain. The organization was extremely critical of former military ruler Gen Musharraf and his pro-American policies so he had banned it in Pakistan in 2003. Gen Musharraf might have banned it to please Israel with whom he was then trying to 'normalize' diplomatic relations.

HT is strongly anti-Zionist and calls Israel an 'illegal entity'. Some observers believe that HT is the victim of false allegations of connections to terrorism whereas it explicitly commits itself to non-violence. Perhaps, that is why despite ban in Pakistan, it hardly faces any difficulty in disseminating its message to the public through posters, seminars, literature and even rallies. Allegedly a letter, designed by the HT in 2010 had urged the members of the Pakistan's armed forces to revolt against their top civilian and military leadership for their alliance with the United States. The said four officers were only questioned in that context, not detained.

The arrest of these high ranking officers raised fears about growth of a group which aspired to make Pakistan a base for the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. The army had taken

links of serving officers with HT as an illegal activity and against Army discipline. On the other hand Brig Ali dismissed reports that his companion soldiers were in contact with militants or had links with banned organisations like HT.

However, the ISPR contained that in big institutions like army, presence of such individuals could not be immediately dismissed. Efforts were at hand to trace other members of HT in Pakistan Army who had contacts with Brig Ali; showing zero tolerance policy of such activities within the military organization of Pakistan.

Contrarily a general image of Brig Ali Khan had been prevailing that:

'... He might have contacts with the banned group but he was not involved in any type of conspiracy. His father was a junior officer in army. His sons and son in law and younger brothers are also serving there. Every Generals know Brig Ali Khan.

Even Gen Kayani knows him; they (the whole family) can never think of betraying the army or this country. He was an intellectual, an honest, patriotic and ideological person. It's a fashion here that whosoever offers prayers and practices religion is dubbed as Taliban or militant. Just to please America and to fool the Pakistani people, such allegations have been levelled against him.'

However, one could find a sure fact available on his record that he had been piling up enormous pressure on the top brass to stop extending any moral or intelligence help to the US forces on or around Pak-Afghan borders. Brig Ali had joined army in 1979, went up like a normal career officer but stumbled down when he once openly criticized Gen Musharraf during his visit to the Quetta Staff College.

During his staff course at Quetta Military Staff College, Brig Ali Khan had asked Gen Musharraf, in an open question-answer session, about the contents of key-agreement between the US and Pakistan. Brig Ali had also asked to define the 'limits' of co-operation with US on 'the war on terror'. His questions were never answered but Gen Musharraf was not happy over this unexpected encounter.

After the course, when the next army promotion board was held in GHQ with Gen Musharraf in chair as the Army Chief, Brig Ali was superseded on the same account. Subsequent promotion boards had also rejected him while his colleagues and subordinates continued to rise up the promotion ladder and went senior to him. He should have gone for early retirement but he opted to continue with the same rank and pay. For some he was serving for a 'better' cause. He had developed a habit of writing letters to high-rank Generals who were his colleagues or juniors, with suggestions on how to expel America from his native soils.

Brig Ali had made it as mission to appraise his seniors including Gen Kayani that Pakistan's "unconditional" support to the Americans was causing resentment in the lower ranks of the army. In his opinion the growing American involvement and influence in Pakistan's military affairs was negatively affecting the morale of the army. No senior wanted such advisory notes, he was told to shun this practice, but Brig Ali continued with it taking it as his sacred duty *'to save the prestigious institution he was serving'*.

Once he had addressed a personal letter to President Zardari suggesting him *'to make Pakistan economically self-reliant by freeing the country of American aid and stopping perks and privileges given to senior civil and military officials'*. The said letter was sent back to Gen Kayani for comments and necessary action. Most people understand the meaning of such necessary action in disciplined forces so Brig Ali was earmarked for a cogent tutorial lesson on discipline.

On 5th May 2011, in a meeting at GHQ Rawalpindi, Brig Ali Khan had spoken out before the presiding officer Lt Gen Javed Iqbal over 2nd May's episode of killing Osama. He opined that:

"The culprits who had hidden Bin Laden' and allowed the Americans to get away with breaching Pakistan's sovereignty were to be found within the army."

When he went in details all the officers attending that meeting, except two, were found supporting him. Lt Gen Javed Iqbal was furious and the proceedings were reported to the Army Chief Gen Kayani instantly. Next day a special meeting of Corps Commanders were called, Osama's killing discussed and the same evening Brig Ali was arrested. The problem was that his anti-US views and opinions on self reliance were getting popularity among army ranks at all levels.

Subsequently Brig Ali faced the army's Court Marshal.

GEN ZIA'S RADICALIZATION:

Referring to a recent article from **Sana Ahmed of BBC Urdu**; during Gen Ziaul Haq's regime the 'molvi' [bearded religious person] had acquisitioned more importance in day to day life of a soldier. Sometimes there were objections on wearing shorts during 'exercise' classes and sometimes on viewing television in common room. Every officer or *jawan* [soldier] was allowed to avail short or long leave on the pretext of going on *tableegh* [preaching Islam] and could be called for explanation for not offering prayer during duty hours at least.

Decidedly, during the last four decades the professional expertise of Pakistan army has been affected but the commentators offer different reasons for that. Its real appreciation depends upon the fact that from whom this question is being asked and how he defines or understands pan-Islamism in contemporary context over Pakistan's Army.

Most people like to debate that Gen Ziaul Haq was the founder or propagator of '*Radicalization in Pakistan Army*'. Some opine that this phenomenon had taken start in late Z A Bhutto's regime. Prof Khurshid Ahmed of *Jamat e Islami* (JI) place all the responsibility of this radicalization on Bhutto's shoulders saying that '*Eemaan, Ittehad aur Jihad*' slogan was coined by the Pakistan Army during his rule. The fact remains that by urging so Prof Khurshid is trying to dissociate his JI from Gen Ziaul Haq's blessings. No doubt the above slogan was introduced in the army in Bhutto's regime but it was actually the brainchild of Gen Ziaul Haq who was the Army Chief (COAS) those days.

It is an interesting treatise to go into details that how ranks in Pakistan Army got inclined towards pan-Islamic values pushing back the nationalism, which is normally considered a cause of prime honour for and core asset of all armies world over. It was Gen Ziaul Haq who had started making the Pakistan Army a true Islamic *Jehadi Force* (religious fighters) when he assumed the office of the Army Chief in 1976.

However, it also remains a fact that Gen Ziaul Haq himself ruled Pakistan for eleven years in the name of Islam but he never tolerated any other officer taking the flag of Islam in his hand to lead the army or the nation in that direction. See the next few paragraphs.

When Gen Ziaul Haq's name was announced as the new Chief of Army Staff towards the end of February 1976, it came as a very big surprise throughout the country. He was the junior most Corps Commander and had not shown any extraordinary brilliance either in peace or in war. In fact, his past was quite obscure and not many people in the Army had known him. On the other hand most of his seniors who were superseded had distinguished service records. Even Lt Gen Sharif, though promoted to the rank of a General and made Chief of Joint Staff, was in a way superseded because that post carried almost the same constitutional powers as late Chaudhry Fazal Elahi had as President during Mr Bhutto's regime.

Just after three weeks as being the Army Chief, on 24th March 1976, Gen Ziaul Haq announced his team of five new Corps Commanders on the radio. Some very junior Major Generals named M Iqbal, Sawar Khan, Faiz Ali Chishti, Ghulam Hassan and Jahanzeb Arbab were promoted as Lt Generals. The big names Division Commanders Maj Gen Tajammul Hussain, Maj Gen Akhtar Abdur Rehman, Maj Gen Fazal e Raziq, Maj Gen Mateen, Maj Gen Ch Abdur Rehman, Maj Gen Jamal Said Mian, Maj Gen Amir Hamza (DG Civil Armed Forces), Maj Gen Wajahat Hussain (Commandant Staff College) were all superseded.

After the appointment of Gen Ziaul Haq as Chief of Army Staff, about a month earlier, this was the second big jolt in the Army. Except for Jahanzeb Arbab, who had been superseded earlier because of having been found guilty of embezzlement of huge amount of money while in East Pakistan by a Court of Inquiry, headed by Major Gen M H Ansari but continued to remain in an officiating Command of a Division with the rank of a Brigadier for nearly two years up to as late as February 1976 when he was promoted to the rank of a Major General, all others were those who were on staff in GHQ.

GEN TAJAMMUL SACKED:

On 25th March 1976, Major Gen Tajammul called Col Aslam Zuberi to his office to tell that:

'I had dedicated my life for the cause of Islam and that I had no desire for the accumulation of wealth and property or even for higher promotion except with the ultimate aim of establishing a truly Islamic State on the pattern of Khulfa Rashideen.'

Major Gen Tajammul had asked him if he could provide him necessary information on the communication set up in the country. His Colonel Staff betrayed him. The same evening he [Col Aslam Zuberi] went to Rawalpindi and reported to his Corps Commander and then perhaps to Chief of Army Staff, Gen Ziaul Haq portraying that Major Gen Tajammul was planning to overthrow the Government.

Next morning major Gen Tajammul was told to attend a conference at GHQ on 28th March. He was briefed about his intentions and also that disciplinary proceedings had been initiated against him. The inquiry launched on him lasted for five days. On 3rd April 1976 he was told to attend the Chief of Army Staff's office. As he entered that office Gen Ziaul Haq, flanked by four Lt Generals, Sawar Khan, Ghulam Hassan, Faiz Ali Chishti and Ghulam Jilani were all sitting for his trial. After some questions Gen Ziaul Haq told him about his retirement being a 'fanatic' which was no more needed in Pakistan Army.

Some young army officers of 3rd Baloch Battalion were inspired by Major Gen Tajammul Hussain who had attempted coup of 23rd March 1980 and was subsequently court martialled. Gen Mirza Aslam Beg immediately restored Major Gen Tajammul's complete military honours and privileges when he assumed the office of the Army Chief after Gen Zia's air crash. Gen Tajammul was serving a sentence of 14 years RI for planning to liquidate all army Generals and Gen Ziaul Haq's government. Both were contesting for the Islamic way of governance in Pakistan but being opposite to each other.

Major Gen Tajammul once commented that:

'I had not intimately known Gen Zia before he became the Chief of the Army Staff but from his conduct during the Divisional Commanders Conferences; he appeared to me an incompetent and low grade officer. In one of the promotion conferences, I even saw him sleeping with his mouth open. He surpassed all limits of sycophancy when meeting the Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. While in uniform, he used to bow when shaking hands with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.'

'I remember that Brigadier Hayat, with whom I served as his Brigade Major, once told me that he had written in Major Ziaul Haq's ACR when he served under his command, 'Not fit to go beyond the rank of a Major'. It is an irony of fate that a person of such calibre had ruled Pakistan for a long period of eleven years till he was finally killed in an air crash.'

Coming back; this concept of Islamic values in army was developed further when Gen Ziaul Haq became Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) and the President of Pakistan after military coup of 5th July 1977. Mosques were already there in all the field and staff units of army but got re-built, expanded and decorated with special grants of budget under his directions.

The Commanding officers, even of the highest ranks of Generals, started offering prayers in the front lawns of their offices extending invitations to all around including their security and communication staff. Special supply orders were placed for *lotay*, caps, *chappals*, mats, *tasbeehs* and Maulana Modoodi's books for all mosques of army units everywhere.

In the same Ziaul Haq era, all unit *Imams* were given free summer and winter uniforms comprising of white *Qameez Shalwars*, *Chappals*, black jackets, black *Sherwani* and *Jinnah Caps*. They were made part of a new army unit of *Khateeb*s starting from the basic rank of *Naib Khateeb* with an equivalent rank of Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO).

JCOs were promoted to higher ranks at par with other army ranks as *Khateeb*s and *Khateeb e Aala* etc. Orders were conveyed to convene regular competitions for *Na'at Khawni* at all levels. At all formation headquarters a regular post of 'GSO grade II' was sanctioned with necessary staff and budget to handle those religious affairs.

The *Khateeb*s had to be 'having beard' and expert in delivering sentimental Islamic sermons. Likewise, at Corp Headquarters there was given a sanctioned post of 'GSO grade I' and those General Staff Officers were to be in army uniforms like other army ranks. In GHQ Rawalpindi a new Directorate of Religious Affairs was established under control of an officer with brigadier rank. This Directorate still convenes annual competitions of *Na'at Khawni* at the highest level, gives away prizes and trophies to the top winners. Free *hajj* for selected officers and men every year is also arranged, funded and controlled by the same directorate.

In good old days a 'Services Book Club' was established in army for providing books to all army members to enhance their professional knowledge. It was a compulsory membership, a nominal subscription was contributed by all, four books were usually delivered to them yearly but mostly on selected topics of military history or tactics etc. In Gen Ziaul Haq's rule the selection of books was confined to religious subjects starting from '*Tafseer ul Qura'an by Maulana Modoodi*' in six parts. Some of the dissenting voices were also there from officers and men from other sects of Islam but in disciplined forces like army the volume of agitation remained confined to the low tone thus ignored.

The history of Pakistan Army tells that the Islamic values always existed in the institution, as it ought to be, but no General ever interfered in the performance of rituals through any means. Tolerance prevailed and individuality always respected. Discussions on religion and women were already forbidden in army messes and meetings. Gen Ziaul Haq brought the Islamic traditions in, generally guided by JI which created an opponent class within ranks based on sectarian beliefs.

On the other side an altogether new group emerged in the army declaring themselves the flag bearers of Islamic *Jihad*. This phenomenon gave birth to another wave of pan-Islamic ideology meaning thereby that Pakistan Army would look after the whole Islamic world at the cost of its own borders and nationalism. Thus the professionalism moved away from ranks and '*Islamization*' filled the vacuum till Pakistanis entered the Afghan War, the most controversial move in the history of Pakistan army, in 1980s. Gen Ziaul Haq had started that war but still the whole Pakistani nation and the generations thereof are suffering it.

Gen Ziaul Haq's era of *Islamization* of Pakistan Army pushed the country in Afghan Jihad which by and by took away tolerance, nationalism and professionalism from this institution. American dollars had fascinated the then COAS to the extent that he raised slogan of *Jihad* against Russian intruders in Afghanistan. After some years Pakistan was able to expel Russians away from Afghanistan but inadvertently opened tribal borders for Uzbek, Chechnyan and dissident Arabian & Afghan criminals to settle down in Pakistan.

Americans had taken away Gen Ziaul Haq in August 1988's crash, immediately after their mission and his role in the region were accomplished. However, while leaving Pakistan in distress, the US agencies made sure that the above mentioned foreign *jihadists* should stay here, marry the local girls, give birth to another generation of martyrs, train them and bring affront to the same Pakistan Army who had once brought them here in the name of 'greater Islamic cause'.

GEN ASLAM BEG'S REVERSE GEAR:

Undoubtedly, it was COAS Gen Mirza Aslam Beg who became pioneer to mellow down that *jehadi* process in army by getting distributed a published booklet in the whole army declaring that:

- The Army *Khateeb*s should have Bachelor's Degree as minimum qualification in any discipline or subjects.
- They would not be able to declare them as member of any sect whatsoever; neither verbally nor by practice.
- They would only be able to deliver certain agreed '*khutbas*' given in that book; approved for all and common in all sects.
- The army officers and *jawans* were able to offer prayers at times convenient to them. Compulsory time observing was abolished.

The *tableegh* holiday trends in officers and *jawans* were discouraged. It created good normalizing effects but it was too late till then to start with. Due to general atmosphere in the country the whole society moved towards conservatism and the same inclinations were reflected in the army for the then developing generation. Subsequent army chiefs could not dare to take away those 'Islamic reforms' from the institution so the suffering continued.

In short, during Gen Ziaul Haq rule, Islam was made an identity for Pakistanis at the cost of nationalism. When *Islamiyat* was made an integral part of national syllabus the state media played a vital role for its propagation. In all competitive examinations like PCS, CSS, NIPA, Defence College courses and tens others it was made obligatory to study it and pass through. JI was heading this movement with utmost zeal and vigour because first time with Gen Zia's sanction the JI followers were allowed to enter in command and control of Pakistan's Army.

Interestingly, during Gen Ayub Khan's governance, attachment with JI was banned in the army. A member, *rafique* or associate of JI was normally considered as un-told 'security risk' in Gen Ayub's government and pre-entry intelligence reports of all civil and military gazetted officers had to confirm that the candidate was 'clean' in that respect.

Shiraz Paracha in his article titled 'Time to change: *Imaan, Taqwa, & Jihad* (as cited in *www.Pakspectator.com* dated 3rd July 2011) opines that:

'..... (Gen) Ziaul Haq institutionalized religion in the armed forces of Pakistan; during the 1980s practice of religious rituals became common in the Pakistani military so was corruption and incompetence. Some commanders were accused of being involved in criminal activities including drug trafficking and arms sales.

Generals turned into wheelers and dealers and receiving kickbacks in military deals touched new heights. The experience of the last 21 years proves that exporting and using militancy as a foreign policy tool has failed miserably. Such policies have back-fired causing death and destructions in Pakistan and elsewhere....'

Another cogent view associated with above lines was also expressed saying that:

'.....Gen Musharraf hated religious people so much so he only promoted his breed of liberals and enforced a westernized culture in the forces. The divisions in the army are a natural reaction. All those people who are in bed with CIA should be kicked out as well. Why the double standards?'

Gen Ziaul Haq, while serving as Brigadier and posted in Jordan (1967-1970), was instrumental in killing thousands of Muslim Palestinians and the event is known in history as '**Black September**'. Later he fooled PM Z A Bhutto by giving him a tank uniform in Multan. On 1st

March 1976, Mr Bhutto approved Gen Ziaul Haq as the Army Chief, ahead of a number of officers senior to him as stated earlier.

At the time of Gen Ziaul Haq's nomination as COAS, the officers in order of seniority were Muhammad Shariff, Muhammed Akbar Khan, Aftab Ahmed Khan, Azmat Baksh Awan, Agha Ibrahim Akram, Abdul Majeed Malik and Ghulam Jilani Khan. Mr Bhutto had chosen the most junior, superseding seven Generals senior to Ziaul Haq but he overthrew Bhutto by using the Supreme Court of Pakistan which gave the world a new legitimacy for Military rule under the "doctrine of necessity".

Gen Ziaul Haq had killed Bhutto under the orders of America's Henry Kissinger who had once vowed to show the extreme fate on both Bhutto and Indira Gandhi for their nuclear programs. Mr Bhutto knew it. It is on record that during the PNA movement of 1977, once Mr Bhutto had said in an open gathering in Raja Bazaar Rawalpindi that:

'Listen Mr Ambassador (pointing towards America) despite your conspiracy I'm here; my party is here; PPP is here; it is not dead; we are not dead ...'

Though the protests were being staged by the PNA but Mr Bhutto did not mention PNA rather he had acumen of understanding his background opponents.

One Nazia opined on the above cited internet site that:

'..... From above discussion it appears that it was just a game of Dollarism and Islam's name was highly misused in Pakistan army and its political structure. Where the Islam goes when they take on defence deals and plans with America. All Generals from Auyb till today who followed US programs are now running billion rupees franchises or own such amount assets. Their Islam hides when matter of national interest comes. Today army management does not need any kind of professionalism in the line of duty but they have different agenda coming from US embassy. Wikileaks have just hinted all this.'

Within the Pakistan Army, once in 1995, Maj Gen Zaheerul Islam Abbasi was arrested and court martially punished on the charges of 'mutiny in the name of Islam' in the army. He was allegedly trying to take over the government using the name of *Islam* by killing the then PM Benazir Bhutto, the then COAS Gen Waheed Kakar and some senior officers of army establishment. Lt Gen Jehangir Karamat had captured those characters headed by Maj Gen Abbasi who were sentenced for seven years after due process. It was the first danger alarm heard and felt in the Pakistan Army. The higher echelons have been trying to encounter that danger since then.

Later, on 4th May 2009, the eagles of Pakistan Army had arrested one Col Shahid Bashir, the commanding officer of Shamsi Airbase [in Balochistan] and his two aides, a former Sq Leader of PAF named Nadeem Ahmed Shah, and a US green-card holder & mechanical engineer name Owais Ahmed Shah. They were charge sheeted for providing secret and sensitive information about the Shamsi Airbase and its strategic location, till recently [precisely till 11th November 2011] being used by the US forces to launch drone attacks on Pakistan's tribal belt. His two civilian companions were hatching terrorist attack on the airbase on the basis of the information provided by Col Shahid. The final outcome of the said trial is not known yet.

Coming back and leaving aside the army, Gen Ziaul Haq, because he was the president of the country too, made '*Islamiat*' a compulsory subject in all school and colleges in which more emphasis was laid on known Islamic historical battles. Thus the fresh crop of entrants in civil and military departments were adequately equipped with the concepts of Jihad, aged old war techniques and sectarian differences rather than contributions of Muslims in science, medicine and technology, open-mindedness, patience and brotherhood. How army as an institution suffered from this theory, one can look into details of our failures in Siachin, Kargil, FATA, Kashmir, Karachi and Peshawar as well as at diplomatic missions in foreign countries.

Allegedly, Pakistan is moving towards a 'failing state' day by day since Gen Ziaul Haq's days. Call it back, if possible.

