

# THE MIDDLE PATH

Acts of violence like the recent Srinagar killings are un-Islamic, writes Islamic scholar FARIDA KHANAM, adding that Islam prescribes to the middle path which means the path of moderation



**T**he recent killing of a government school principal, teacher, and a chemist in Srinagar is deplorable. Not only innocent lives have been cowardly taken away but that this inhuman act which has nothing to do with Islam has been perpetrated in the name of Islam.

The questions on everyone's mind are: Why are Muslims performing acts of violence? Does Islam sanction violence? To find the answers we need to look at Islam's original sources. An act can be considered Islamic if it is based on the *Quran* and *Sunnah*, the practices of the Prophet of Islam. Let us look at the actions of these militants in light of the Islamic tenets.

Regarding killings, the *Quran*, 5:32, states: "Whoever killed a human being...shall be regarded as having killed all mankind, and that whoever saved a human life shall be regarded as having saved all mankind."

Contrary to the action of Muslim militants, the Islamic perspective can be seen from the above verse of the *Quran*. The killing of a person is not simply the elimination of an individual; it is the setting of an evil precedent, the effect of which will continue, directly or indirectly, to have a baneful influence upon all mankind. When militants justify such killings wrongly in the name of Islam, it is a form of religious extremism, termed as *ghulu* in Islam. The *Quran*, 4:171, states: "Do not go to excess in your religion."

The same point has been made in a *Hadith*. The Prophet of Islam observed: "Refrain from extremism,

it is highly disastrous for you."

'Ghulu' means 'extremism'. The way of extremism is wrong, whatever the circumstances, for it goes against the spirit of religion. Extremists are not born as such. They have been trained in a wrong ideology based on the political interpretation of Islam that justifies violent *jihad* in the name of Islam.

It is the militants' proneness to extremism, which is leading to violence, war, and killings. Being dissatisfied with the path of moderation, they easily incline towards violence and are ever ready to open hostilities to achieve their objectives.

Moderation, which is the opposite of extremism, is closely interlinked with peace. When people possess the virtue of moderation, they necessarily think in terms of peace and will engage in their struggle in a peaceful manner. Where there is moderation there is peace and vice versa. According to a *Hadith*, Prophet Muhammad ob-

served: "The moderate action is the best of all actions. Hazrat Ali advised the people: 'Adopt the middle path.'" *Tafsir Qurtubi*, 154/2

Islam prescribes to the middle path, which means the path of moderation. According to the tradition of the Prophet of Islam: "A Muslim is one by whose hands and tongue, people are safe." A Muslim is, therefore, a peaceful member of society. Anyone who claims to be a Muslim but is not peaceful, is not a Muslim. This is the criterion for being a Muslim. This is the true spirit of Islam. Negative reaction or negative thinking is un-Islamic.

The root word of 'Islam' is 'silm', which means 'peace'. So, Islam is a religion of peace to the last extent. Islam does not sanction violence, war, and killings. We need to re-engineer the minds of extremists based on the peaceful message of Islam. Their thinking needs to be transformed to make them understand that peaceful approach is a *sine qua non* to attain success in this world. ■

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## PERSPECTIVE