

Tablighi Jamaat: The Fountainhead of Global Extremism

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Abstract

The Tablighi Jamaat is a transnational radical extremist organization having footprints in more than 150 countries with an estimated 70-80 million active followers. Even though it claims to bring wayward Muslims back to more orthodox practices of Islam as its main motive, in practice, it maintains strong links with regional and transnational radical groups and terrorist infrastructure and preaches global jihad. Against this background, while highlighting the radical ideology the Tablighi Jamaat espouses, this paper argues that the Tablighi Jamaat is a fountainhead of global extremism that poses an insuperable challenge to mankind, and peace and stability across the world.

Keywords: *Tablighi Jamaat, Islam, extremism, jihad, terrorism*

Introduction

The Tablighi Jamaat (henceforth TJ) is a transnational radical extremist organisation with solid footprints in more than 150 countries across four continents (Asia, Africa, America and Europe) of the world. Since its creation in 1927 by Mohammad Ilyas Kandhlawi till date, it has been able to mobilise some 70 to 80 million active followers from different ethnicities and nationalities, which make it “the largest Islamic organisation in the world.” (Salam, 2020) A recent commentary (EFSAS, 2021) put the figure at 400 million, with 20 million Tablighis in Pakistan alone. This “dominant form of Sunni Islam in contemporary India” (Ahmed, 2019) is the most “visible” (Masud, 2000) and “influential” religious movements in 20th Century Islam. Even though some Western scholars (Metcalf, 2010; Ritz, 2006; Fuller, 2002) in their observations have described the TJ as non-violent, non-political, missionary, revivalist, transnational Islamic pietist or reformist, the TJ has just been the opposite and is accused of spreading radicalism, extremism and terrorism across the globe. Against this background, this paper exposes the myths and realities revolved around the TJ and its activities. This paper explores the nature of its extremist ideology and its links with

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the global “Islamist ecosystem.” (South Asia Democratic Forum, 2020) This paper analyses and explores the TJ’s global jihadi and terrorist network, and its influence and potential to radicalize individuals. This paper mostly uses secondary source materials in English language such as books, research articles, newspapers and web materials.

Preaching and Working of the TJ: Myths and Realities

The religious ideology, preaching and working of the TJ are shrouded with myths and mysteries. What it preaches and professes, in real sense, it does not put everything into practice. It is, therefore, important to note herewith few points to corroborate the aforesaid argument.

Firstly, the TJ describes itself as “the Society for spreading faith,” but in reality, it believes in and works for a kind of Tablighisation of the world to establish a transnational Islamic regime through a “planned conquest.”(Gaborieau, 2006) The statement of Mohammad Yusuf Kandhlawi, who led the TJ for nearly two decades (1944-1965), after his father Mohammad Ilyas’s death, stated: “the collective community of Islam should be supreme over groups of nations...” (Mayaram, 1997) This idea is as similar as the world view of terrorist organisations like the ISIS and Al Qaeda.

Secondly, the TJ vociferously preaches that “Islam must subsume all other religions.” (Alexiev, 2005) One of its basic tenets, *Ikram-i-Muslim* (others are *Kalima*, *Salaat*, *Ilma* and *Dhikr*, *Ikhlas-i-Niyat* and *Tafriq-i-Waqt*) calls upon the Tablighis “to pay respect of all forms of Islamic religious practices and avoid those actions which may lead to religious arguments and confrontations.”(Ahmed, 2019) But in practice, it not only disregards other religions such as Hinduism, Christianity and Jewish, but also shows intolerance to the Muslim brethren like Shiites, Sufis and Barelvis. According to Indian scholar Yoginder Sikand (2002), the founding of TJ aimed at countering the Shuddhi movement of the Hindus. Besides, the TJ denigrates the mystical-sensual practice of the *Dargah* (Mayaram, 2020) and calls for eradication of shrines and the cult related to the Sufis. (Malik, 2008) Even, the TJ and Hizb ut-Tahrir (henceforth HT), a prominent Islamist group in Central Asia, are in conflict with each other, notwithstanding their belief in Sunni Islam. (Biard, 2018) There is even a deep rooted ambivalence in Tablighi texts with regard to the envisaged pattern of inter community relations, and some dub non-Muslims as *kafirs* (infidels) (Mayaram, 1997).

Thirdly, the TJ's claim of being a non-violent and pacifist organisation is baseless. It is worthwhile to mention here that the TJ has never ever condemned any sort of violence, even terrorist attacks that have resulted in loss of lives and property and wrecked havoc across the globe. The TJ believes in power and use of force as rightly deduced from Mohammad Ilyas's views: "first acquire power, then prevail upon the people by dint of force to live upto the organisation's (TJ) expectations" (Troll, 2014).

Fourthly, the TJ propagates a radical form of Islam. For instance, the TJ's central concept or *raison d'être*, (Siddiqi, 2012; Salam, 2020) known as *Dawah* (inviting people towards God), is understood as "the propagation of the radical Islamic ideology." (South Asia Democratic Forum, 2020) Similarly, the TJ makes a fundamentalist and literalist reading of the holy Quran, and believes in obscurantist and extremist ideologies, which in turn lead to Islamic neo-radicalism (Mohammed, 2015) and neo-fundamentalism. (Biard, 2018) Its bonhomie with Deobandis since its inception adds more rigour to the TJ's brand of theological and ritualistic Islam, (Ahmed, 2019) conservatism, Salafism and "orthodoxy". (Salam, 2020) Even the TJ and the Deoband along with Jamiat-e-Ulema Hind were known as "three corners of a single fabric." (Mayaram, 1997) Like the Deobandis, the TJ rejects modernity and dubs it antithetical to Islam, and also opposes technological advancements. (Salam 2020) While indicating an inherent elitist bias towards women folks, (Rashid, 2006) the TJ excludes women, (Alexiev 2005) even prescribes *purdah* (veil) for women. (Troll, 2014) It staunchly believes that the "women must be prohibited by all Islamic rules and they must not have permission for *gasht* (rounds)." (Mayaram, 1997) Further, the nexus between the TJ and the Wahhabis was unearthed when late Sheikh Abd al Aziz ibn Baz, perhaps the most influential Wahhabi cleric in the late twentieth century, recognized the TJ and supported its activities as well. (Alexiev, 2005) The TJ's Wahhabi connection is further disclosed by noted Indian historian Irfan Habib (NDTV, 2020). While speaking to NDTV, Irfan Habib pointed out the closeness and similarity between the ideology of TJ and the Wahhabis of Saudi world. According to him, most of the TJ's funding comes from Saudi government. Irfan Habib rejected the TJ's claim of being apolitical. He even dubbed the TJ as the "enemy" of Islam and is against modernity, and is sectarian, puritanical and reductive. It is understood that the TJ does not believe in the virtues of secularism, democracy, constitutionalism, and modern history of colonialism and

nation states, (Metcalf, 1993) as many people, groups, communities, institutions and nation states in the world believe in.

The influence and radical activities of the TJ in the Indian subcontinent (especially in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) has been so much that scholars like Ziya Us Islam (2020) are tempted to point out, “you can take the Tablighi Jamaat out of India, but you cannot take India out of the Tablighi Jamaat.” The TJ is supported by radical organisations like Jamaat-e-Islami (India), and Jamiat e ulema-Islami and Jamaat-e-Islami (Pakistan). When the Tablighis travel to Pakistan for initial training, radical Islamist and terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and Taliban not only offer but also provide military training. Two examples are important to mention herewith: i) John Walker Lindh, known as the American Taliban, had travelled to Pakistan in 1998 with Tablighi cadres to brush up his Islamic studies before joining the Taliban; and ii) the members of Lackawanna Six Cell travelled through Pakistan to Afghanistan in 2001 on the pretext of studying Islamic religion and culture at the TJ training centre, from where they moved to Al Farooq terror training camp run by Al Qaeda. (Burton and Steward, 2008)

Similarly, France has claimed that the TJ is one of the four most active Islamist organisations in the country (Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists and Turkish Movement are the other three) and 80 per cent of the radical Islamists the country has encountered have had some sort of contact with the TJ that had made serious and constant efforts to re-Islamize working class in suburban areas. The TJ has been instrumental in a) indoctrinating the teenagers and parents through their supervisors, b) influencing children education through imams, and c) helping non-Muslim families (especially Jewish) in the enrolment of their wards in Muslim dominated public educational institutions. Similarly, the Netherlands accuses the TJ (along with Muslim Brotherhood and HT) of encouraging Islamic neo-fundamentalism. (Biard, 2018) Besides, the TJ is using Portugal as a platform for spreading its pan-Islamic message to Portuguese speaking populace in Africa and Latin America (Brazil) (South Asia Democratic Forum, 2020).

Sixthly, the TJ is hierarchical, dynastic, and ruled and controlled by one family, the Kandhlawis lineage of its founder Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi, hence there is no transparency about its activities. His son Muhammad Yusuf (1944-65), grandson Inamul Hassan (1965-95), and great grandson Muhammad Saad Kandhlawi (1995 onwards) have

been controlling the TJ for the last nine decades or so. Because of the dominance of one family and one person, the TJ was split into two in 2015, one group led by Muhammad Saad and the other was known as Shura Alami that set up its headquarters first in Navi Mumbai and then in Raiwind in Pakistan (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2020).

Lastly, the TJ's claim of sponsoring its activities on *khuruj* (self financing) is often contested. It seems hard to believe that a part-time employee would be able to finance an international itinerary as Tablighi. (Rashid, 2006) The TJ receives huge sums as donations from wealthy patrons, non-government institutions, traders and governments (Saudi Arabia) to establish and run mosques and madrassas. For example, former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's father, Mian Mohammad Sharif, had been a patron of the TJ who donated astronomical sums to the TJ activities in Pakistan. (The Dawn, 2018) An interesting account regarding the TJ's influence and assertiveness is important to disclose herewith. Saudi organization the World Muslim League donates generously to the TJ exchequer, to cover the transportation costs for thousands of poor Tablighis, even for building of the Tablighi mosque in Dewsbury (England) in 1978, the TJ headquarters in Europe. The TJ's claim of not paying any fee or salary to Tabalighis was exposed when Wahhabi sources paid salaries to Tablighi cadres in Africa (much higher than the European Union pays teachers in Zanzibar). (Alexiev, 2005) In addition, the TJ is also not averse to membership in other religious organisations, which fetches enormous financial resources, especially to arrange funding for unemployed young Tablighis to visit India and Pakistan. (South Asia Democratic Forum 11 December 2020) The *ijtema* or the annual gathering in Pakistan (Raiwind, near Lahore), India (Bhopal) and the *Biswa ijtema* in Bangladesh (Tongi) since 1967, (Bjorkman, 2010) are other sources of amassing enormous wealth for TJ's transnational activities. During the *Biswa ijtema*, garment factories, book publishers and producers of daily commodities, who make temporary stalls to sell their products, reportedly pay \$590 to \$1,180 to local landlords for every stall. (Kamruzzaman, 2020) It is believed that the TJ demands and receives a huge sum from the local organisers to fund its activities.

Even the TJ's claim of being apolitical is contested too keeping in view its affiliation with state and non-state apparatus across the world, especially in the South and Central Asia region, which will be elaborated in the next section.

Affiliation with State and Political Apparatus

Notwithstanding the TJ's claims of being "a non-political global Sunni Islamic missionary movement" or apolitical as emphasized by scholars like Barbara Metcalf, Mumtaz Ahmad and van der Veer, there have been "definite political overtones" to the TJ and the Deoband. (Mayaram, 1997) The TJ wields considerable influence amongst powerful institutions of the state and prominent politicians across countries, (Siddiq, 2020) especially in South Asia (Pakistan and Bangladesh) and Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan). For example, the TJ had maintained close ties with a number of Pakistani politicians in the 1990s, including the family of former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, in addition to the top army brass of Pakistan. Sharif had visited the TJ *markaz* at Raiwind on 24 November 2018 to condole the death of TJ chief, Haji Abdul Wahab. (The Dawn, 2018) Nawaz Sharif during his second tenure (1996-99) visited Tablighi congregation at Raiwand, Lahore and had requested TJ leader Omar Palanpuri to convince militant terrorist groups Sipah-e-Sahaba and its splinter group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) to end their violent anti-Shia terror campaign. Palanpuri's reply "there should always be a hot wire along with a cold one to light up the bulb", made Nawaz speechless (Zahid, 2015).

The TJ's nexus with Pakistan's political establishment is so strong that when recently Saudi Arabi banned the TJ dubbing it a "gate to terrorism" and "danger to society", there was a hue and cry in the Indian subcontinent, especially in Pakistan. Even the Punjab's provincial Assembly adopted a resolution on 21 December 2021 in support of the TJ and castigated the Saudi act. (The Nation, 2021) The same day Pakistani Prime Minister's Special Representative on Religious harmony met the Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan and briefed him about the TJ's activities.

Further, during Pakistani general elections in 2002, the TJ supported Muthaida Majlis-e-Amal, the alliance of Islamist parties. Former Pakistani presidents, Farooq Ahmad Legari and Mohammed Rafiq Tarar, well-known Pakistani cricketers Shahid Afridi, (Ahmed, 2020) Saeed Anwar and Inzamam ul-Haq have also been members and supporters of TJ. (Raman, 2007) Abdullah Gul (son of late Lt General Hameed Gul, who was known for his contacts with jihadis in Pakistan

and Afghanistan) criticized the media for blaming the TJ as one of the major sources of Corona virus infection in Pakistan. Further, the TJ's militant offshoot, Taxila (Pakistan)-based Jihad bi al-Saif (Jihad through the Sword), had hatched conspiracy to overthrow Benazir Bhutto because of her abhorrence towards the TJ (Salam, 2020).

In addition to the political leadership, the TJ used to host top military and intelligence officers of Pakistan. In the 1980s, the TJ cadres were allowed to visit Pakistan Military Academy to indoctrinate and convert the officers to the kind of Islam espoused by it. (Zahid, 2015) General Muzaffar Husain Usmani, the Deputy Chief of Army Staff, who was sacked by General Pervez Musharraf in October 2001, (Grare, 2001) was believed to have extended support to the TJ activities. Similarly, former Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) Chief Javed Nasir, the mastermind of the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts, has been a staunch TJ follower (Sareen, 2020).

Bangladesh too witnessed the influence of the TJ at the top political and military level. For instance, the chiefs of Bangladeshi Army, Air Force and Navy used to take part in the TJ's *Biswa Ijtema*. Even former Bangladeshi President Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia used to take part and deliver inaugural address at the *Biswa Ijtema*. (Bjorkman, 2010) Similarly, the influence of the TJ on the religio-political situation in Central Asia should not be underestimated. The TJ's disinterest in politics is mere eyewash. The TJ's strategic goals are connected precisely with politics and power. For example, the TJ imposes its demands, claiming that the decisions made on the *mashfar* (meeting) are distributed to supporters and defenders of TJ around the world, where they are locally customized by the leaders of TJ. (Duysheeva, 2019) Barbara Metcalf (1996) summarises the myths regarding the apolitical nature of the TJ stating that whenever and wherever needed the TJ never hesitates to utilise governmental assistance to secure permits for buildings and meetings, as well as visas for travel. Further, Barbara states that the exigencies and opportunities presented by state recognition, TJ seems to have adopted a higher institutional profile in the West than the status it enjoys in South Asia.

Fountainhead of Extremism, Jihadism and Terrorism

The TJ has become a constant source of violent extremism, jihadi and terrorist activities, because of which, it has been banned in some countries. In the Eurasian landmass, Russia and four Central Asian nations (except Kyrgyzstan) have banned the TJ (Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in 2004, Tajikistan in 2006 and Kazakhstan in 2013) (Raymann, 2014) for constituting an extremist group. Kyrgyzstan has become one of the major centres of the TJ and it is even represented in the Muftiate. The TJ has been accused of recruiting young people, (Soliev, 2015) students, teachers and entrepreneurs. The following sequence of events in the last dozen years or so gives a clear cut analysis of legal and constitutional actions taken by some countries against the TJ. For example, the TJ was included in the Russian Federal List of Extremist Organisations. Russian Supreme Court, in a ruling in May 2009, depicted the TJ as an extremist organisation and banned its activity stating that “the TJ’s structural divisions threaten inter-ethnic and inter-religious stability in Russian society and the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation,” and “its purposes include the establishment of global supremacy through disseminating a radical form of Islam and the foundation of a unified Islamic state called the Global Caliphate on the basis of regions with traditionally Muslim populations.” (Duysheeva, 2019) In October 2012, more than 200 TJ cadres were banned in Kazakhstan, which was nearly half a dozen times in comparison to 35 in 2011. (Interfax, 2012) Further, in early 2013, a District Court in Astana banned the TJ at the behest of the Prosecutor General who declared the TJ an extremist organization. The Court accused the TJ of distributing and circulating extremist literature. At a conference organized by the State Agency of Religious Affairs in March 2013 on the theme “Tablighi Jamaat - A Destructive Religious Movement”, the Chair of the conference, Kairat Lama Sharif, explained that 80 per cent of extremists in Kazakhstan were from the TJ. (Wolters, 2014) Similarly, in 2020, the State Religious Affairs Committee of the Central Asian Republic of Uzbekistan brought out a 40-page list of banned religious literature, websites, and other materials by all outlawed groups,

such as the TJ along with ISIs, HT, Nurchilik, Akramiya, and Katiba Tawhid wal-Jihad. (Najibullah, 2020) Most recently, Saudi Arabia, once a chief patron of the TJ activities and main financial sponsor, has banned the activities of the TJ.

The TJ preaches the radical Deobandi-Wahhabi-Salafist jihadist ideology that so many global terrorists share and follow. One radical wing of the TJ goes one step further advocating jihad through the sword (*jihad bin saif*). (Alexiev, 2005) Because of the TJ's introduction to religion, a significant number of jihadis were inspired to join terrorist organisations. (Siddiq, 2020) In this context, western scholar Marc Gaborieau (2006) summarises how jihad has been the warp and weft of the TJ's activities. Firstly, TJ has connection with the Deobandis, who advocate jihad through violent means. Secondly, the first book of Maulana Maududi (1903-1979) on Jihad, which marked the birth of Muslim fundamentalism, appeared first in a Deobandi journal in 1927, the birth year of TJ, and has been a source of major inspiration of the TJ for its direct or indirect jihadi activities. Thirdly, the view of Mohammad Ilyas on jihad, which has profoundly affected the hearts and minds of Tablighis, states: "the travel (for Tabligh) has the same characteristics as the raids (*ghazwat*) (in jihad), and therefore, we hope to earn the same reward. Even though it does not constitute "physical fighting with weapons" (*qital*), it is still a branch of jihad. It is lower than *qital* in some respects, yet it is higher in certain respect." Syed Abul Hasan al Nadwi, who has written extensively on Mohammad Ilyas, reiterates Ilyas's view on Jihad in the following words: "it is binding on all Muslims to take an active interest in Jihad, which is nearest to the method of the holy Prophet" (Nadwi, 1979).

The TJ's jihadist ideology has enticed many disillusioned and disgruntled Muslim youth into the world of jihadism. At the behest of the TJ, Pakistan based terrorist organisation, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) recruited many young Muslims for jihad during gatherings at Raiwind. (Rana, 2004) HuJI's founder Qari Saifullah Akhter and Fazal ur Rehman Khalil were former TJ members. International terrorists like

Masood Azhar have reportedly travelled extensively in East Africa (Sudan, Somalia and Kenya) to help build TJ network there. (Sareen April 2020) In this context, the statement of Tariq Pervez, former Director General of Pakistan's National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) seems important: "*Tablighi Jamaat attracts youth and brings them into the mosque, but, then, cannot control them. In the mosque, people associated with jihad and sectarian groups, and, in some cases, their networks are also present. Most vulnerable are the new entrants to the Tablighi fold.*" (Rana, 2009) Many jihadists express desire to travel to Pakistan and Afghanistan for jihadi training. Jeffrey Battle and the other members of the Portland Seven had travelled to China with the intention of entering Afghanistan via Pakistan. (Burton and Steward) The TJ's jihadi connection is further corroborated after former ISI Chief and an avid TJ supporter, Javed Nasir had admitted in a court affidavit with regard to supply of weapons in Bosnia and other jihadist hotspots in complete violation of UN sanctions (Sareen, 2020).

Tablighis do have many common similarities with the militants and terrorists, as summarised by an erudite scholar, Barbara Metcalf (2010): a) a belief that Islam must be defended; b) a commitment to individual action as effective in shaping the larger world; and c) the conviction that a faithful few, who act "in the way of Allah," can achieve far-reaching transformations. Pakistan based and sponsored terror outfits like Harkatul Ansar, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, (HuJI), Harkat-ul Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Jihad bi al-Saif, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba have been associated with the TJ somehow or other. Harkat ul Mujahideen and the TJ even make up a truly international network of jihadis and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shari-at-i-Muhammadi (TNSM) maintain a close link with the TJ. (Alexiev, 2005) Hundreds of Uyghurs from China's Xinjiang were sponsored by the TJ for jihadi training at the Islamic University (Islamabad) and Syed Mawdudi International Institute (Lahore) (Warikoo, 2016).

In addition, those who joined militant jihad in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries have unleashed terror attacks in their home countries

after being brainwashed by the TJ. It is reported that among the Indians who have gone to wage jihad on behalf of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, some 17 had links with the TJ. (Timesnownews, 2020) The ISIS sponsored online English magazine, the *Voice of Hind*, brought out its special 17-page lockdown edition hailing the TJ Chief Muhammad Saad and calling upon Muslims to become Covid-19 virus carriers in order to spread it and kill *kuffars* (non-believers). (Ojha, 2020) The TJ has also been directly benefited from Islamisation process of Bangladesh, which helped in the rise of terrorist organisations in Bangladesh, such as Jamatul Mujahiden Bangladesh (JMB), Horkatul Jihad, Hizbut Tahrir, Al Bayinaat and Hefazat-e-Islam. (Siddiqi, 2017) Intelligence reports claim about that the JMB militants joining the TJ in large numbers, (Sharma and Behera, 2014) after the JMB was hounded out by the security forces. In North Africa, the TJ's activities involved the formation of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria. A section of Moroccan Tablighis are under investigation for their link with terrorist organisation At-Takfir wal-Hijrah. Another Tablighi has been convicted for masterminding the Casablanca terrorist bombings of 2003. Investigation is also on to probe the links between the Moroccan cells and the murder of Theo van Gogh (Dutch filmmaker in Netherlands in 2004). In May 2017, more than 100 militants entered into the Philippines and used the TJ's *johor* (an international and local gathering) as cover to sneak out Isnilon Hapilon, a top ISIS terrorist in Southeast Asia (Dancel, 2017).

A Brussels-based think tank, South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF) summarises the TJ's violent extremist and terrorist activities in Western world in a report published in 2020. According to the report, the TJ not only serves as a "springboard" for terrorists and the "operational headquarters for terrorist cells", but also "a nursery for indoctrinating Islamist terrorists" as well as a "de facto conduit" for terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda to recruit new members. According to the report, some 50,000 TJ cadres are active in USA operating through Tablighi mosques in California, Texas and New York. The Al-Falah Mosque in the Corona area of Queens, New York, happens to be the TJ's *markaz* in North

America. The report has found out the direct or indirect complicity of Tablighis in the Portland Seven (October 2002) and Lackawanna Six attacks (September 2002) in the US, and the plot to bomb airliners en route from London to the United States (August 2006). Further, the ‘shoe bomber’ Richard Reid, the ‘dirty bomber’ Jose Padilla, and Lyman Harris, who sought to bomb the Brooklyn Bridge were associated with the TJ, the report adds. Two perpetrators of San Bernadino massacre (December 2015) had paid their obeisance at the local TJ mosque. Similarly, the report jots down the grave concern European countries express over the activities of TJ in Europe. Some terrorists are initially trained by TJ and then transited through the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist movements to wreak havoc in Europe. TJ too has a strong presence in the United Kingdom. Its cadres were involved in London underground bombings (7 July 2005) and attempted bombings in London and Glasgow, Scotland (July 2007). The 7/7 London attackers, Mohammed Siddique Khan and Shahzad Tanweer, had prayed at the TJ’s Dewsbury mosque before the attacks. Similarly, Spanish security had found out 14 suspects (12 Pakistanis, an Indian and a Bangladeshi) of the TJ for planning to attack vital installations in the country. Further, three leading members of the TJ were found to be the masterminds of Madrid train bombings (March 2004). In Germany, the TJ was first mentioned in 2004 as a potential threat. German Administrative Court (VG) Ansbach’s (State of Bavaria/Bayern) rulings on 9 and 18 May 2005 state: “TJ not only supports terrorism, but also endangers the liberal democratic basic order and security of Germany. It also serves as a recruitment base for violent Islamist groups and jihadist networks.”

Conclusion

It is found from the above analysis that the Tablighi Jamaat is out and out an extremist organisation that believes in the conquest of the world by any means. It is also found that the noble principles or salient features the TJ has been talking about are nothing but eyewashes. The unwavering faith the TJ has on the Deobandi-Salafist-jihadist brand of Islam shows its fundamentalist side, and many a times the tone and tenor of radical

and militant Islam. This exclusivist Islamic organisation is against the liberal social and political order, nation-state, the concepts of democracy, secularism and inclusiveness to which many countries on this earth swear by.

The TJ feigning to be apolitical is largely contested as this extremist group has not only been involved in political processes of many countries, especially in South Asian countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh, but also has influenced politics there. The TJ “committed a crime against humanity” (Taskin, 1 April 2020) by defying Indian Government’s orders banning large gatherings during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, when TJ cadres were taken away from the Nizamuddin mosque for quarantine and testing of Covid-19 in March 2020, their behaviour towards the female nurses on duty was appalling and indecent. The TJ cadres disrobing in front of the female staff, roaming without their pants in their wards and passing lewd and derogatory remarks reflects their fundamentalist mindset.

Further, it is proved that the TJ is a vital component of an “Islamist Ecosystem” that has spread its tentacles across the globe as a sympathiser, supporter and sponsor of violent religious extremism. There are verifiable evidences against the TJ for its direct and indirect involvement in jihadi and terrorist activities across the globe, which jeopardise world peace and stability. It is a clear cut fact that the TJ has been overtly and covertly associated with international terrorist organisations such as Al Qaeda, Taliban, the ISIS, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and others. The TJ is basically anti-state, anti-government, anti-culture and anti-humanity thus posing an insuperable challenge to the entire world community. Time has come for the international community to find out combined strategies how to tackle the menace of religious extremism propounded and spread by organisations like the Tablighi Jamaat.

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