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AN EXPLORATION OF PATRIOTISM OF A MUSLIM FAMILY IN MUKUL DEVA'S '*BLOWBACK*'

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Abstract:

This article presents and interprets Mukul Deva's third novel, Blowback (2010) as the realistic picture of the patriotism of an Indian Muslim family in the Indian perspective. 'Blowback' is both the personal portrayal of love between its protagonists Iqbal and Tanaz and their struggle with the terrorists and the terrorism in the Indian context. In this article, I will discuss how Iqbal Khan, the ex-Lashkar-e-Toiba militant turned Indian elite Security Squad, Force 22 and helps the Force 22 in eliminating the leaders of Indian Mujahedeen and its members. It will also trace how Tanaz, the beloved wife of Iqbal who is actually a member of Indian counter-terrorist Force 22 supports him in his task, by killing two of the major leaders of IM when she fights her death. This article aims at exploring the political aims of the terrorists behind their terrorist activities, which is of crucial importance.

KEY WORDS:

Patriotism, Muslim.

INTRODUCTION

Blowback is Mukul Deva's third novel which carries over some of his experiences of terrorism in India, as an Army Officer of the Sikh Light Infantry and as an Indian citizen. According to Tanya Thomas one of the readers of Mukul Deva's works, "*Blowback* gives the real picture of growing terror faction which has become increasingly confident and frighteningly lethal." The novel reflects the author's disapproval and deep-seated dissatisfaction with the terrorists and with the internal security in India, through the presentation of the lives of protagonists Iqbal and Tanaz. On the surface level, it seems the truthful tragic story of various terror attacks in Indian cities like Varanasi, Ahmedabad, Surat, Pune and Delhi, but seen as a whole it exposes the broad political motives behind these terrorists activities in the Indian context. The novel '*Blowback*' will be analysed and interpreted to explore this most crucial issue in the world today i.e. political terrorism. This article discusses in full length that how Deva portrays Iqbal and Tanaz's struggle with terrorism living among them as the members of their terrorist group for the sake of eliminating them to save innocent people and the country India from them. It also discusses how the narrative explores the broad political motives behind their political activities

MUKUL DEVA'S IDEOLOGY OF TERRORISM

Mukul Deva is at home with phenomenon of terrorism particularly concerning India and Pakistan, and of course Afghanistan. The role of United States of America in creating a unholy mess in the region, does not escape his attention. As an army officer, he peers across the world regardless of personal political beliefs. He wants discipline and peace above all else.

He wants to run an efficient and clean system. This attitude of Mukul Deva dictates the form of his novel and also gives the narrative a sense of novelty. He suggests that Mother India is under the threat from within and without, in his crisply military logic. So to him, it is the duty of every Indian to fight and defeat all the fissiparous forces responsible. (Chatterjee 2010). He shows that a warlord in the rugged tribal areas of Pakistan pushes an alliance of terror groups to take on the American suitors who are using him to attain their own goals. But Pakistan and ISI are playing double-game with America. The origin of terrorism and Jihad is in Waziristan a border town of Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the deadly terrorists live safely and spread their Jihad across international borders. He shows the army insurgency across the border arranged by Indian army and Indian government. It reflects the strategy of Indian army and soldiers in Pakistan. Pakistan gives shelter to the most dangerous terrorists in world, and the suicide bombers also. He expresses his concern if the terrorists would get the nuclear weapons in the hands of strong fundamentalists. He takes us to the roots of terrorism and introduces all types of terrorism, as an active global citizen. He exposes the dizzying international links of all the terrorist organizations working in India and abroad. As a thinker, he provides insights into the true nature of terrorism, along with information of weaponry. Deva finds our government as irresponsible towards Pak-sponsored terrorism that we have suffered all these years. He comments that Pak is handing itself to Taliban, the most dangerous terrorist organization. To him, our country has an ancient and glorious military heritage. He denies that terrorist have no religion he gives us the detailed information about recruitment methods and processes of the terrorists. According to Deva, young Muslim students are chosen from Indian universities and colleges, on the basis of their love of Islam and they are taken to Pakistan for training by instigating them on the ground of religion. They are given money and training. They don't find it difficult to come and go out of our country, Deva thinks. Those students are given the training of making bombs and putting them at certain places which are their fix targets. They use sophisticated technological devices easily. Their devices are more powerful and destructive than that of the army. He explores the mental make up of the jihadis, their mindset and the circumstances which are capable of inflicting widespread damage to children, women, adults and to public property also. (Anantha Narayan 2010) He believes that the Indian government think in tactical and short term methods. They are trying to cure the symptom and not tackling the disease. He affirms that his views on the terrorists and the terrorism can be found in history. That is firmly grounded in history. He has written whatever is happening around us. So his stories are most realistic and authentic which are actually the grim realities of postmodern life. He has the first hand experience of how the terrorists work by recruiting technically inclined boys who can understand their nuclear-chemical, biological weaponry to conduct the devastation. (The Hindu 2008). He feels sorry to see the facts that terrorists find it easy to recruit people using religion as a ploy. Organized religion has done a lot of disservice to mankind. More wars have been fought over this and more people have died in the name of some God or the other. He says that God is magnificent but he has no single name and there is no stipulated way to pray to him the better off we will be. Our worship should lie in our thoughts words and deeds. He wants to let the average Indian civilian know that life is like soldiers for the Indians.

Terrorism, to Deva is the use of violence and threats to intimidate or coerce, especially, for political purposes and a terrorist is so heavily subverted and radicalized that he becomes ready to die. Military force can be used to hammer the terrorists and bring them to the negotiating table. But then a political, economic and relevant solution has to be negotiated by the powers. If their demand is unreasonable that everyone should follow one religion then negotiation is unlikely. Then the fundamentalist thought process has to be destroyed.

Political Motives Behind Terrorism at the Beginning

Blowback opens with the following important events and incidents at the beginning.

1. Iqbal the protagonist of the novel is sent to Pakistan for the training to be a terrorist given by Lashkar-e-Toiba.
2. The Indian security squad, Force 22, of which captain Tiwathia and Captain Sami, have gone to Pakistan to eliminate the operations of Lashkar-e-Toiba and to eliminate Salim, the terrorists leader. Tanaz, is

working in the Intelligence Security Wings of Force 22 of Indian Army and she is with them.

3. A bomb blast in Jaipur has killed Iqbal's mother and sister, so he has joined Force 22, to eliminate the terrorist groups, to take revenge by turning himself Force 22 member by leaving terrorists group.

4. In the meantime, a warlord from Angoor Adda of South Waziristan Ameer-ul-Momineen and Omar and other members of the terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and Taliban have held a secret meeting near Afghanistan-Pakistan border for the survey of their terrorist activities. It discloses the political issues when they talk about the attacks of American Joint Special Operations Commandos in Swatt valley. One of the member remarks "...that conniving politician bitch the Americans were trying to thrust on us yet again"

(6) The other member Ameer remarks "It will not be long before Kafir is on the run and the One God rules the world." (6) It shows politics behind terrorism.

5. Indian Security Squad Force 22, which has gone to eliminate Murad Salim meets Iqbal and Tanaz near the border. A terrorist fires at the Indian Captain of Force 22. Iqbal comes in between and takes the bullet into one side of his chest. The Force 22 crosses the border to India and Tanaz takes the responsibility of taking Iqbal to nearby doctor, named Pervez, near Pakistan border. She saves Iqbal in their encounter with the Pakistani Army patrolling there. When they reach the border, the Force 22 of Indian Army takes them to Chandigarh. Their love and marriage takes place in such tumult situation.

These events which take place at very beginning of the novel 'Blowback' reflect political conflict between America, India and the terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and Taliban. They are risen to the crest of Jihadi wave and are trying to join all the terror groups to take on the Americans. Then the game of political terror and double dealing begins. Ameer-ul-Momineen, the Commander takes care of the Indian operations." (19)

PAKISTAN SPONSORED TERRORISM IN INDIA

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines terrorism as "the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force government to act." In '*Blowback*' it deals with those violent acts intended to create fear (terror) in the minds of common people and governments with political goals. It deliberately targets the civilians. The novel reflects the actions of terrorists through bomb blast. 'Blowback' pictures such a terrorist organization established in Aligarh University named YPS (Youth for Peace in Society) working under the guidance of Pakistani ISI and which has the fake name of Indian Mujahideen to show it to be a terrorist organization of India only. The leader of the YPS is Asif who joins other members like Imtiaz, Ashraf and Khalid to create a strong nationwide network which provides them support, finance, media and legal support also. They say that people who are ready to kill for Allah are the jihadis. One member of YPS like Salafi complains "The Kafir (non-believers) government is screwing us all over the place." (22).

The narrative explains their complaint about the politicians in India who pretend to be taking cares of the Muslims, but actually they are deprived of everything by insulting them. Asif, the most calculating terrorist working under Mujib (a bomb supplier) joins young, smart, and mentally mobile graduate and post graduate Muslim students from colleges in Pune, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Delhi and Aligarh.

Here Force 22 makes a plan of making Iqbal and Tanaz to live in Pune. Iqbal takes admission in the management college and comes in contact with Asif who instigates Iqbal who pretends to be his victim and thus Iqbal becomes one member of the terrorist group. Everytime Iqbal has to follow Asif by taking Bombs in hand and he informs Force 22 and they diffuse it. Thus he saves the lives of many innocent people. The plot of '*Blowback*' shows this type of double dealing of Iqbal to eliminate the Indian Mujahideen group. It covers the tragic bomb blasts incidents from Pune, Varanasi, Surat and Jaipur. Asif once becomes suspicious about someone in his group but Iqbal befools him every time by showing his loyalty to the group.

The novel gives the most deteriorating picture of Pakistan's economy and the economic helps to Pakistan by America and its misuse in building Madarassas by them. Deva stresses the loyalty of Indian Muslims by saying "historically the Indian Muslims are secular and by now totally sick of the way our religion has been maligned by these jihadis" (62). In this way the novel shows that terrorist activities in India are the results of the political rivalry between India and Pakistan.

Broad Political Aims of the Terrorists: The Climax

When it comes the time of the planting bombs in various temples in Delhi, Iqbal informs the Force 22 of Indian Army and succeeds in diffusing all the bombs except one. He brings the arrest of the terrorist like Ashraf, Imtiaz and death of Khalid. But Asif succeeds in running away. After hearing news on television he comes to know about the traitor i.e. Iqbal. He makes firm decision to teach a lesson to Iqbal.

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That very night Asif, Mujib and other wait for Iqbal in his own house by injuring Tanaz very brutally with their knives. When Iqbal comes and takes Tanaz into his arms, she takes his Pistol and shoots Mujib and Asif and saves the lives of Iqbal and her baby in her womb and she dies. Tanya Thomas writes "The heart breaking end is so well written with the right amount of sentiment."

This last scene is full of political overtones which are reflected in the speech of Mujib, before his death. "You must see for yourself the death awaits all those who betray the jihad" Mujib pays his respect for Pakistani ISI and the terrorist leader Ameer-ul-Momineem by saying " Soon! Very soon, the crescent will rule the world. It's not going to be long now before India fragments and the two Pakistans (one Bangladesh) are reunited. Not just.... once Mughalstan becomes reality which it will soon!" (329). These examples show the climax of the political aims which the novel *Blowback* explores. The remedies to prevent such terrorist activities have been suggested by Captain Sami and Captain Tiwathia in their interview with the PM of India after the bomb blast in Ahmadabad. They are:

1. Every Indian must have biometric Identity card.
2. The boundries of Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh must be sealed.
3. The migrated Bangladeshis must be driven out of India.
4. The Muslims in India should be given full security and equal treatment like others.
5. CC cameras should be set at the popular religious places.
6. Awareness of nationality must be inculcated among the Muslims.

CONCLUSION

Blowback through its circular narration completes an indictment of its central characters in the centre of the political terrorism in India which brings the death of Tanaz, and the death of main leaders of Indian Mujahideen. Iqbal and Tanaz do much more than expected, to eliminate them. Captain Sami shows the map of would be Greater Pakistan which includes the north and the east of India and Bangladesh intended by all terrorist organizations.

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