

## THE CONCEPT OF JEHAD IN ISLAM

Prof. Dr. M. Nazeer Kaka Khel\*

### Abstract:

*After 9/11 the U.S. singled out the Muslim world as its arch enemy. She has invaded Afghanistan & Iraq as the chief supporters of terrorism & militancy. Both these countries are under occupation. The U.S. has installed proxy regimes in these countries under the pretext of Constitutional democracies. It is a matter of common knowledge that foreign occupations breed resistance & insurgency. People naturally rush to arms for the liberation of their homeland. In a situation, where the so-called state & state-functionaries, are collaborators of the invading forces, the question crops up as to whether & not a disciplined resistance can be offered by ordinary citizens. What is meant by Jihad? Is it the sole prerogative of the state or even the non-state actors can pool their resources & act as a state within a state & fight against the occupying forces? This brief article addresses itself to this burning issue. Of course, the author claims no finality. Our purpose is to initiate a dialogue on this vital issue.*

The term Jihad has been derived from the root j.h.d. The word Jahada means to strive, to expand effort.<sup>1</sup> The word Jahad or Juhd means exertion. The verbal noun of jahada, that is, Jihad means striving or the expanding of efforts. The Holy Qur'an has employed these terms in a variety of meanings.<sup>2</sup> But in the technical sense which is based on the phraseology of the Qur'an, jihad means the exertion of one's power in the path of Allah, that is, the spread of the belief in Allah and in making His words supreme over the world.<sup>3</sup> Jihad according to Muslim theologians and jurists, varies in degree, that is, it assumes different shapes. Thus it may be fulfilled by heart, by tongue, by hands and finally by sword.<sup>4</sup>

---

\* Prof. Dr. M. Nazeer Kaka Khel, Chairman, Dept. of Political Science & IR, Qurtuba University of Science & IT, Peshawar, Pakistan.

Exertion in the way of Allah may both be understood in a wider as well as in its limited sense. Bearing hardships for the sake of Islam, persuading others to the religion, striving hard for durable peace (Islam) helping the poor and needy, speaking the truth before tyrant rulers and if need be, resorting to arms for the sake of restoring durable peace and dignity of human life and freedom belong to the first category of Jihad. Hence jihad in this sense covers a vast field of the life of Muslims and also includes “Qital” which means taking up arms in the path of Allah to make His words supreme.

Here it will not be out of order to refer to President Bush’s doctrine of Pre-emptive and Preventive wars. If he advances these doctrines for the sake of peace thereby killing innocent people it is commendable act on his behalf but if Islam invites people to join the forces striving for establishing durable peace, its followers are branded as terrorists. What a contradiction and hypocrisy?

Coming to the sequence, it is to be noted that both the terms *Jihad* and *Qital* are traceable in the Makkan verses of the Holy Qur’an in the sense referred to in the preceding paras. Thus in Sura al-Ankabut, the term Jihad is used in its broader sense when the Holy Qur’an says:

*“as for those who strive in us, we surely guide them to our path and lo! Allah is with the good.”<sup>5</sup>*

It is noteworthy that qital was permitted when Muslims were allowed to resort to arms against the forces of tyranny because they had been wronged and subjected to severe tortures and driven out from their homes by the forces of tyranny.<sup>6</sup>

It is noteworthy that those students of Islamic history who do not or cannot have access to the original sources and merely rely on secondary sources and especially on the personal remarks of Orientalists,

often pose the questions as to why did Islam resort to arms in her dealings with the neighbouring states when Islam in itself claims to stand for peace and tranquility? This and the like questions naturally need an enquiry which is being attempted in the following lines.

Islam undoubtedly respects human life and its intrinsic values. According to Qur'an, there is no compulsion in matters of belief.<sup>7</sup> This however, does not debar a Muslim from inviting others to the fold of peace (Islam) in a decent and behaving manner.<sup>8</sup> As Islam preached peace, universal brotherhood and mutual love for one another, naturally its motto must have been "Accept Islam and be in peace". The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said so to individuals and tribes while inviting them to the fold of Islam. This means that Islam stood for the restoration of peace wherein man would not only know himself and his position but his Creator as well and would thus lead an honourable life according to the laws as advocated by Islam.

An important point to be noted here is that Islam strictly forbids its adherents to compel others to embrace Islam. Truth speaks for itself. But at the same time the fact cannot be denied that when human life and freedom is threatened with extinction, the forces of tyranny and oppression must be resisted till dignity and freedom of life and conscience is restored, seduction is no more prevalent and eternal laws reign supreme.<sup>9</sup> In this context, fighting and killing for a nobler and higher cause become a virtue and a sacred duty.

Jihad as an institution and as a doctrine of faith of the Muslims may be traced back to the times when the Prophet (PBUH) had founded the Islamic state as a result of the permission of war by Allah.<sup>10</sup> And soon after the foundation of the Islamic state at Madinah, Jihad was commended as the greatest meritorious service one could render for the

supremacy of Islam.<sup>11</sup> Muslims were ordained to sacrifice their lives and possession in the path of Allah.<sup>12</sup> The Qur'an declared that those who fight in the way of Allah and are killed they are not killed but alive with Allah.<sup>13</sup> Hadith literature<sup>14</sup> and statements of the early rulers and leaders of the Islamic state<sup>15</sup> have emphasized the compensation for the fulfillment of the most important and fundamental obligation of jihad.

Islam makes a distinction between the war against the infidels and hypocrites and the war against the people of book (Ahl Al-Kitab). Regarding the former class the orders were:

*“And slay them wherever you find them and drive them out of places whence they drove you because persecution (fitna) is worse than slaughter.”<sup>16</sup>*

Here in this verse is used the term fitna, a term which cannot be translated into English in a single word. It means trial, temptation, putting a man in difficulties, persecution, social tyranny or social disorder and compelling a man to unlawful submission, or forcibly keeping away a man from pursuing the right path or misleading a man into false pursuits or into deviation from truth. Hence killing is sanctioned by Islam only to prevent fitna and fasad, to re-establish social order, to prevent persecution and to create conditions for the reign of law instead of a reign of terror. The people against whom war was permitted had denied all liberty of conscience to human beings whoever did not agree with them in their worship and customs were persecuted, exiled or killed.<sup>17</sup>

The injunctions regarding the people of Book are that if they live in peace with Muslims in their land and pay the legal dues, they shall not only be allowed to live in the state but will be guaranteed all the rights and privileges granted to Muslim citizens of the Islamic state.<sup>18</sup>

Jihad is a collective duty enjoined upon the Muslim community at large.<sup>19</sup> “The imposition of the obligation on the community rather than on the individual made possible the employment of jihad as a community and consequently a state instrument: its control accordingly is state not individual responsibility. Thus the head of the (Islamic) state can, in a more effective way, save the common interest of the community than if the matter is left entirely to the discretion of the individual believer.”<sup>20</sup>

### **The Nature of War in Islam**

As stated above, jihad was the instrument of the Muslim Ummah through which the ulterior objective of the Islamic state, i.e. restoration of peace, an atmosphere in which there would be religious liberty, freedom of conscience, the freedom of worship and the basic freedoms which imply other liberties essential for the development of human life, was carried out. But it must be made clear that wars in early Islam were neither waged for personal aggrandizement nor certainly for the sake of imposing Islam on others. To the Muslims self-defense had become a question of self-preservation. They should have either submitted to be massacred by the forces of tyranny or fought when they were attacked by the enemy. They chose the latter alternative and due to deep conviction they succeeded after a long struggle in subduing their adversaries. But in spite of their tremendous success neither the Prophet nor his immediate successors imposed Islam on the subjugated people. They had before them the clear injunctions of Qur’an:

*“Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight Him. But begin not hostility for Allah hates the aggressors.”<sup>21</sup>*

Islam was a missionary religion and expanding force. After having deeply penetrated into the hearts of its adherents, it had to move

forward due to its universal and most appealing ideals and the personal character of those preaching and practicing those ideals. The Muslims were not supposed to impose it on others. In the wars against the infidels strict measures<sup>22</sup> had to be taken whereas against the people of book<sup>23</sup> leniency had to be shown in the light of Qur'anic verses.

It is true that the Prophet (PBUH) had ordered an expedition towards Syria during his last illness but it was not ordered with a view to molest foreign territory. The reason for this expedition was that the ruler of that country had killed the envoy of the Islamic state sent by the Prophet. It was not only an act of hostility in the law of nations in those days to take retaliation but even such acts on the part of one state in our times are not only condemned but retaliated in different ways.

After the demise of the Prophet, his successor Abu Bakr had to face grave situation both within and without Arabia. It is said that with the exception of Makkah and Ta'if almost all the tribes had revolted against the central government at Madinah.<sup>24</sup> These uprisings<sup>25</sup> were the rising of false prophets, a general movement of apostacy of the Bedoin tribes and the refusal of some tribes to pay zakat to the centre.

Abu Bakr determined to wage war against all of the rebellious individuals and the tribes. The council of elders (Shura) including "Umar were of the opinion that under the prevailing circumstances it was not feasible to wage war against those unwilling to pay zakat to the centre while remaining considered them as Muslims but Abu Bakr and some others regarded them as infidels.<sup>26</sup> Abu Bakr insisted on waging war against them.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps in doing so he thought that Islam as a religious movement could not be separated from Islam as a political movement. That is why he deemed a religious duty to wage war against all men and

tribes who had revolted against the state regardless of the motives behind their revolt.<sup>28</sup>

After having restored law and order within Arabia, Abu Bakr next addressed himself to the strengthening of the borders of the state on Syrian and Persian borders which however, resulted in a series of wars ending in the subjugation of the Roman and the Persian Empires. Here again the question arises as to whether Muslims took the initiative in waging war against these powers or the opponents? Apparently it seems as if Muslims started these hostilities. But for better understanding the origin and character of these wars, we have to go back to the ulterior motives behind the apostasy movement which rose soon after the demise of the Prophet.

A closer examination of the movements of the Persians and Romans on the borders of the Islamic state would reveal that these powers were convinced that in face of the universal character of Islam and the lofty ideals of the Islamic state, Islam had spread in Arabia. Due to the moral character of its preachers, Islam would reach their domains sooner or later and their empires would crumble down (as the Americans and other Western powers think so presently). The democratic ideals of Islam further posed a direct threat to their political power which had no moral footing. Hence in order to undermine Islam and the Islamic state, they not only encouraged the insurgents in Arabia but by sending reinforcements to them they were actually attempting to thwart the spread and growth of Islam. Persians openly sent reinforcement to the tribes of Banu Bakr when they revolted against Madinah. Sajjah, a Christian lady, who had proclaimed herself to be a prophetess, marched at the head of the Christian tribes on the frontiers of Persia right upto the central Arabia. Tulayha, another so-called prophet, revolted against

Madina in the territory under the influence of the Romans. Such insurrections could not have taken place without the open or veiled support of the Great Powers of the day.<sup>29</sup>

From the foregoing, it follows that the wars were not initiated by the Muslims. These powers due to their intrigues against Islam and the Islamic state compelled the Muslims to resort to arms for self-defense and self-preservation which ultimately led to their annihilation. Had they not been counter-balanced, the Islamic state would have been destroyed by them. Muslims in their struggle for survival were neither motivated by the fertility of foreign lands nor did they wage war against them for avoiding the so-called danger to Islam due to internal strife in Arabia. It was religious fervor and the deep sense of defending their motherland that led them to a series of wars with the Romans and the Persians.

From the treatment meted out to the non-Muslims, it is certain that Muslims never thought of imposing their own way of life on others. Their religion had taught them that there should be no compulsion in matters of religion.<sup>30</sup> Muslims are asked that when they hold power their guiding principles should be that they should not persecute men merely because of their difference with them in religious matters.<sup>31</sup> Islam permits war only for preventing persecution and creating conditions which will permit a reign of terror, a state of disruption and disorder, a state in which it is not possible for individuals to deny all liberty of conscience, a state in which it is not possible for the ruler to persecute, exile or kill his non-Muslim subjects.<sup>32</sup>

Today there is once again a strong movement for the revival of Islam and unity among the Muslims of the world. This movement on the day to bloc their way by dividing them on the issues of Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. Their intrigues in the past have not borne fruits nor their present



misdeeds are likely to bear fruit. Islam is a moving movement for it was moderate in the past it is moderate in the present and will remain so in future. Nothing can come in its way for moving ahead.

### End notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani, *Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Quran*, Cairo, 1961, p.100
- <sup>2</sup> Quran, II:218, VI: 110, IX: 20,73,88, XXIX:6,8. XXXI:15
- <sup>3</sup> *Al-Bukhari, Al-Sahih*, (Noor Mohammad, Karachi), Vol: I, pp.394, 440.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibn Hazm, *Kitab al-Fasl fi'l-Milal wa'l-ahwa wa'l-Nihal*, Vol: IV Cairo, 1317-21 A.H.,pp.135
- <sup>5</sup> Quran, XXIX:69,
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid. II:190-91
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid. II:256
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid. XVI:25
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid. II:193
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid. XXII: 39; See also Ibn Ishaq, *Sirah Rasul Allah*, (Eng. Tr) London, 1968, pp.212-13.
- <sup>11</sup> Quran, II:218, IX:20, IX:80
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid. IV:95, IX:20,80,111
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid, II:154, III:169
- <sup>14</sup> Al-Bukhari, op.cit. *Kitab-al-Jihad and Kitab al-Maghazi*.
- <sup>15</sup> Al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, Lyden, 1964, pp.1829, 1850.
- <sup>16</sup> Quran, II:191
- <sup>17</sup> Khalifa Abdul Hakim, *Islamic Ideology*, Lahore, 1974, pp.180-81
- <sup>18</sup> Sarakhshi, *Al-Mabsut*, Cairo, 1324 A.H. Vol:X, pp.77-78
- <sup>19</sup> Quran, II: 216, IX: 41
- <sup>20</sup> Majeed Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, Baltimore, 1960, p.61
- <sup>21</sup> Quran, II:190
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid. II:193, IX:73

---

<sup>23</sup> Al-Mawardi, *Ahkam al-Sultaniyah*, Cairo, 1298 A.H. p.136, Ziauddin Ahmad, *The concept of Jizyah in Early Islam*, Islamic Studies, IRI, Islamabad, Vol: XIV, No:4, Winter 1975, pp.293f

<sup>24</sup> Al-Tarabi, *Tarikh*, op.cit. pp.1848, 1871f

<sup>25</sup> Al-Yaqubi, *Tarikh*, Baghdad, 1958, Vol:II, pp.128f

<sup>26</sup> Al-Shahrastani, *Kitab al-Milal wa'l-Nihal*, Cairo 1952, Vol:I, p.21

<sup>27</sup> Ibn Qutayba, *Al-Imama wa'l-Siyasa*, Cairo 1968, p.17

<sup>28</sup> The Islamic law of apostasy is based on the Prophetic Tradition, "He who changes his religion must be killed". Abu Yusuf, *Kitba al-Kharaj*, Cairo 1966, pp.179-80.

<sup>29</sup> Mazhaeruddin Siddiqi, *Development of Islamic State and Society*, Lahore, 1956, p.57, Muhammad Ali, *Early Caliphate*, Lahore, 1951, p.58

<sup>30</sup> *Quran*, II:256

<sup>31</sup> Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Quran* (Eng.Tr.) II:256

<sup>32</sup> Afzal Iqbal, *The Culture of Islam*, Lahore, 1967, p.84