

# The Jihad - the Holy War

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Islam's aim, in its wars, battles and national uprisings against polytheism and materialism, has not been conquest, expansionism, imperialism or the seizure of others' financial resources. The early impact of Islam on Mecca caused loss to those vested interests which profited from the service of the ancient idols in the Ka'aba and the pilgrims who flocked to those shrines from all the Arab world. These vested interests therefore revolted against the spread of the new pure faith.

The Qureish cut off relations with the Prophet and his adherents; and forced them to flee into the mountains, where they hid starving, until they finally found refuge in friendly Yathrib, 200 miles north.

Even here polytheists mounted further attacks. The necessity to defend the believers and ensure the survival of the faith forced the Prophet to elaborate and elucidate the concept of a "just war". His raids from Yathrib (which from his adoption of it and its adoption of him won the glorious name of "Madinat-an-Nabi" meaning "the City of the Prophet") were made to prevent the Meccans mobilising large supplies of ammunition and huge forces to attack and wipe out his faithful few.

This concept of "a just war" led to that of, "the Jihad" or "Holy War", and the first revelations on this subject to the Prophet are enshrined in the Qur'anic texts (1) Sura XXII: Hajj- "Pilgrimage" (verses 39 and 40): "Those upon whom war is made by unbelievers are granted permission to fight because they are being oppressed (Verily God is most powerful to aid them) and have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right for the sole 'crime of saying 'Our Lord is God'."

And (2) Sura II: Baqara - "The Heifer" (verse 190): "Fight in the cause of God against those who attack you. But be careful to maintain the limit, since God does not love transgressors. "By "limit" is meant that the force used must be limited to that which is the minimum adequate to restrain the evildoers who attack. The force used must never exceed that limit in order to exact revenge or impose an imperialistic conquest.

As a world faith for everyone everywhere, Islam knows no geography; but must extend to every last soul in every last region of the world, and carry them its word of truth. History shows that no established order was ever replaced by a new superior order without some warfare.

Examples are the revolutions in France, India, America, Russia, China.

Since Islam sets out to change men's living and thinking, and to end radicalism and exploitation, it is to run into opposition from people with vested interests in corruption. Indeed, the more successful it is in winning adherents by word of mouth and of pen, the fiercer is the reaction of those who find themselves losing their hold on people they have previously victimised. In the end the victory of arms confirms the earlier victory already registered by propaganda appealing to men's reason and conscience.

Addicts of uncleanness, dishonesty and power work up a violent resistance in the endeavour to stifle the new faith and the sound society it is producing, which is putting them out of business. Since they refuse to attend to sense they must attend to the sword. As the Prophet expressed it, according to "The Book of the Jihad and its Methods". "Goodness and blessing flourish where law wields the sanctions of force to prevent ill-doing. For alas, there are people who will not submit to what is right unless they feel that sanctions threaten penalties for transgression." When freedom of thought and of choice of the best way of life is taken from men, force, either of police or of army, must be called in. It was to reduce oppressors and tyrants to subjection, in order that the oppressed might be freed to listen to the challenge of Islam, that the first Muslim battles took place.

The masses must be given freedom to make their own choice; for without that the truth cannot come to control societies, nations and the world. As it is written in Sura IV. Nisa'a-"Women" (verse 75): "Why should you not take up the Jihad in God's cause, and for the cause of the weak in Mecca, your own men, women and children, who cry out: "Our Lord! rescue us from this town of oppressors; and raise up for us a protector, coming from Thee to aid us'?"

Islam does not war against people. It wars against oppression, tyranny and wrong. These false ideas it seeks to root out, and to replace them by the superior ideas of purity and faith. It seeks not to win over enemies, but to win enemies over to its - that is God's - side, in the eternal battle between good and evil. For humanity faces the choice between self-annihilation through evil on the one hand or the kingdom of God on earth through obedience on the other. There is no third way. To serve or to seek anything other than God and His will is idolatry. The worship of possessions, self, or power is as much idolatry as sacrificing to stock and stone. It is a negation of man's true nature and destiny.

Therefore, before embarking on hostilities, Islam always sends a herald to the enemy bearing the invitation to accept Islam and make peace on the spot. Thus, when the Muslim armies entered Iran, the Muslim Commander-in-Chief sent a messenger to the General Rustam Farukhzaad inviting him to a conference at which the Muslims explained why they were there, saying: "We have come to free your people from slavery to false deities and vain superstition

and to lead them to the freedom of worship of the One God. In His Apostle's Name we invite you, as you will face the dreadful day of judgment, to be saved and replace your dark and inane customs with the justice and equity of the true Faith."

These conferences lasted three days. All the Muslim spokesmen promised that should be left to run their own country in peace if they accepted Islam as they were being invited to do. It is related, in the book above quoted on the Jihad, Volume 2, page 421, that the Prophet said to Ali: "Never be the aggressor who starts a war. First invite your enemy to turn to the true God. If God leads one person through you to enter the life of faith, that will be of greater benefit for you than if you owned all that the sun shines upon."

Islam's aim is that the knowledge of God should cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and His kingdom extirpate violence and lust and degradation and oppression and injustice; and to this end Muslims are prepared to give their lives in peace or if necessary, in war. As it is written in the first verse of Sura XXXVII: Saffat - "Those ranged in ranks". "By those who range themselves in ranks and so are strong against evil and in proclaiming God's message 'verily, verily your God is One'."

Similarly, in Sura VIII: Anfal - "The spoils of war" (part of verses 47 and 67) the Prophet sternly rebuked some of his fellow-fighters who followed the dark customs of the age of ignorance after a victory saying to them: "Be not like those who started from their homes insolently and to be seen of men. Your lusts are for the goods and delights of this world while the Lord desires for you an eternity of joy."

In his book entitled "War and Peace in Islam", Dr. Majid Khadouri writes on page 214: "Islam changed the old Arab conception of the 'Darul-Harb' or House of War into that of the 'Dar-ul-Islam' or House of Islam, which truly sought to minister Islam to the people of the world. Its first success was in uniting the nations which accepted it within themselves, so that civil wars ceased. It went on to found a family of Islamic nations at peace with each other. It aims to bring that blessing to the whole world. Thus the aim of the Jihad is peace on earth, and that will be its final result."

Western Crusaders developed their concept of chivalry from the conduct of the Muslim paladins in war. One great principle was that the lives of the many poorer folk should be saved by settling the issue of the dispute in a single combat between two champions each chosen to represent his own side.

A whole range of courteous attitudes and actions was developed to govern such contests. They were carried over into the peaceful contests called "jousts", in which knights fought each other to show their prowess before their monarch and their people, and also to practice against

the day when they would be meeting the champion of an opposing army in serious warfare. The chivalrous and knightly conduct towards the fallen foe, which these contests taught, altered the entire manners of nascent Europe as it emerged from the barbarism of its latest invaders from the North. Ransoms were exacted and paid with honour.

Muslim armies were forbidden to cause the destruction of property, the burning of houses, the wasting of crops and pastures, the filling of wells or the deprivation of food. Mercy must be shown to the conquered. The utmost consideration must be manifested towards the enemy's children, aged, women and sick, whether mentally or physically afflicted.

Professor Muhammad Hameed-ulla of Paris University in his book on "The Prophet and War" (p.9) writes: "The Arabia which acknowledged the Prophet and Islam is a peninsula of over one million square miles in area - the size of all Europe west of Russia. Yet no more than 150 persons lost their lives in the reduction of that entire peninsula, so that in the course of ten years a maximum of 15 deaths per annum because of fighting must be reckoned. Few other conquerors in history can show such a record."

The Prophet, sending his troops to fight, is reported by the book on the Jihad (Volume 2, p.424) to have addressed them in the following terms: 'Go in God's name for God's cause with God's aid, and act as God wishes you to act. Show no treachery or falsehood towards His commands. Mutilate no one. Show mercy to the aged, the incapable, women and children. Only when it is inevitable cut down a tree.

Grant sanctuary to any prisoner from the least to the highest in order that they may hear the word of truth. Whose follows that truth becomes your brother. If he refuses, release him to go to his home when peace is made. At all times and in every situation pray for God's help and obey His guidance about your conduct."

Similarly the Imam Ali, when the army of Mu'awiye came to attack him in Iraq, gave his final command to his troops as follows: "if your foe takes to flight on the field of battle, pursue him not nor slay him. Persons who have lost the power to defend themselves or have fallen wounded on the field of battle must not be harmed. Women must be respected and must not be caused to be afraid or to be troubled."

In war it sometimes happens that the enemy does something which moves a Muslim to a desire for revenge', but the Muslim is bidden in such a case to return to his first aims and basic principles and to fight against the desire to transgress against the truth and against that excellence which he has been tempted to forget, and to be first of all victor over his own passions, which is the true victory, prerequisite for an Islamic victory in war.

We were all brought up on the story of the Imam Ali laying an opponent prone and sitting on

his chest to reason with him about the true faith : whereat the foeman spat in the saint's face. Ali at once rose and walked away. His followers asked him why , and he said: "I felt rage rising in my heart at that man's insult, and was tempted to slay him on the spot. If I had done so, it would not have been a just execution of a recalcitrant infidel because of his invincible ignorance, but an act of personal revenge under the impulse of passion. What is the good of my seeking to reason with him and bring him to a true faith unless I am living that true faith with a pure heart and free from pollution myself?"

In the Holy Qur'an such an attitude is enjoined in many places, for instance in Sura II: Baqara - "The Heifer" (verse 194): "If anyone transgresses against you requite him with an exactly like action and restrain yourself for God; and know that God is with those who so restrain themselves."

Or again Sura V. Ma'ide - "The Table Spread" (verse 9): 'O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not others' hatred of you make you depart from justice and swerve towards wrong. Be just: for justice is next to piety. And fear God; for God knows all you do.'

And again, in the same Sura (verse 3): "'Let not the hatred of some who shut you out of the sacred mosque lead you to transgression and hostility. Help one another to righteousness and piety, not to sin and rancour. Fear God, for punishment is God's and He is strict with all." Or, in connection with conflict between believers, Sura XLIX: Hujarat 'The Inner Apartments" (verse 9). "Should a group of believers split into two opposing parties, make ye peace between them. If the violence of one against the other goes beyond bounds, bring force to bear on the group which is transgressing so badly, until it once again complies with God's commands. When such compliance has been exacted, then make peace between the two parties with justice. Be fair in arbitrating, for God loves those who are fair."

The emphasis of this passage on the blessing God gives to peacemakers, and His command that Muslim fighters should be peacemakers, even if they have to use force to bring the recalcitrant to heel, rather than ask the weak to forgive and to renounce his rights as is too often thought godly, is particularly worthy of remark.

Islam enjoins renunciation of one's own rights in the interests of peacemaking, while still recognising that human nature is bound, willy-nilly to feel resentment at injuries. It calls on believers to replace the passion of resentment with the greater passion for God's will, and with obedience to His calling to end division, violence and the use of force on earth. It is in the light of this command that Islam has always showed the utmost compassion towards nations which it has conquered, and exerted itself to give them that true sense of real independence

which comes to people whose hearts are fixed on God and who live to make His will regnant upon earth, starting with their own community.

The people of Homs closed the gates of their city in the face of the army of Heraclius. They told the Romans that the Muslim rule with its justice and law courts was preferable to the tyranny and force they feared.

When the Muslim army under the command of Abu 'Ubeida entered the territory of Jordan the Christians of those parts sent a letter to the Muslims which read as follows: "O Muslims! You are preferable to the Byzantines for us, even though they are of the same creed as ourselves. You are more trustworthy, more just, more kindly, more beneficent to us. They not only took dominion over us but also plundered our houses."

Philip Hitti writes in Vol. 2 of his "History of the Arabs"(p.638): "Wherever the Islamic army set foot, the people of those parts received them with open arms and brought them viands and water, and vied with each other in leaving their entrenchments to join the Muslim - not difficult to understand for those who realise what the tyranny of the Visigoths had been!"

Nor did the Muslims force peoples of occupied lands to change their religion. Islam arranged a system by which they guaranteed freedom of religion to believers in any of the heavenly books by forming them into "Millats", semi-autonomous communities within the state with the right to their own forms of worship, to their customs at birth, at marriage and at death, to their own schools and the use of their own tongue if they had a language of their own like Turkish, Armenian, Kurdish, or Aramaic. They were exempt from the "Zakat" or "Tax in aid of the poor" which was incumbent on all Muslims. This exemption was because the Zakat has a religious as well as a political side.

Instead they paid a poll tax because they were not Muslims. Payment of the poll tax guaranteed their citizenship rights in the whole community. Thus Islam guarded the tenderest scruples of conscience of followers of the revealed religions. It extended this care in its lawgiving to the treatment of criminals, of civil causes, of commercial matters, as well as the strictly religious side of life, so that the minorities were free and safeguarded in the following of their convictions.

In the Qur'an rules are laid down for the relationships of Muslims with non-Muslims. If the non-Muslims maintain a friendly attitude they are well-treated, though of course hostilities must be repulsed, whether overt or covert. But Muslims are forbidden to begin aggression of either type.

As it is written in Sura LX: Mumtahana "(The Believing Woman Refugee) Who is to be tested" (verses 8 and 9): "God does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those who are not

hostile to your faith and do not drive you out of your home. For God loves the just. But God forbids you to turn to those who are against your faith and drive you out of your homes or support others in driving you out. Those who turn to such do wrong."

Christian and Jewish minorities live under exemplary conditions in Islamic countries, in a coexistence where each respects the other's rights. When the Prophet first came to Yathrib many Jewish groups lived there, and dwelt alongside the Muslims without the least friction, a condition which was continued by the Caliphs after the Prophet's death.

The Founder of Islam said: "'Whosoever harms a tribute-paying infidel living amongst us has harmed me." And again: "Beware! whosoever injures a non-Muslim, or steals even a worn-out piece of cloth or takes the smallest thing he owns without his consent, will find me on the side of the prosecution when he comes to trial on the Day of Judgment."

When the Imam Ali was Caliph he one day came across a blind and helpless old man and asked for information about him. His officials told him that the old man was a Christian who in his youth and strength had been a civil servant. The saint replied: "'You used him for work when he was young and cast him off when he is old and weak! He must be given a pension from the public treasury to ensure his livelihood."

Dr. Laura Vacceia Vaglieri writes that the words of the Prophet and the Fatwas (ex-cathedra decrees) of the great Islamic jurisconsults show up the falsehood of the story that Islam imposed its religion by the sword. The Qur'an lays down that "'compulsion has no place in religion."

The Prophet safeguarded the Christians of Nejran and ordered that reverence should be shown for their place of worship. He further ordered his commanders that even the fleas in the houses of the Jews were not to be touched. Adam Metz writes that the Muslims showed a respect for synagogues and churches which no European land in medieval times showed for synagogues and mosques. And Professor Gustave le Bon writes that under Muslim rule in Spain great Christian conferences were held in Seville (AD 872) and Cordova (AD 852). Nor was any post under the government or any other job forbidden to Jews or Christians.

The Crusaders' capture of Jerusalem was a horror of brutality. Pyramids of heads were constructed. 1,000 Muslims who had sought sanctuary in their mosque were mercilessly put to the sword. Blood flowed knee-deep in the Temple courts. Kenneth Clark writes that in the history of mankind no worse warfare has been waged than the brutal Crusades, with the Normans' lust for lands and the Europeans' desire for the profits of the fruitful Eastern luxury trades behind them.

The Crusaders held Jerusalem for 88 years, and lost it again after that period to the Muslim

armies led by the great Kurdish General Selah-ed Deen Ayyoubi, whom the Christians called Saladin. This was in October AD 1187 (AHL 583, Rajab month). Instead of massacring all the Christians in imitation of the Christian massacre of its Muslims 88 years before, peaceloving wise Saladin proclaimed a public amnesty; and forbade the execution, the plundering, or the torture of any Christian, so adding another glorious page to the world fame of Islam. The true spirit of Islam governed all its troops in this as in its other wars. Saladin ordered a constitutional security for all the inhabitants of Palestine. He gave one dinar to every man and to every woman and two dinars to every child, with the permission to settle where they would. Security was greater in Jerusalem than in any other city so that the Latin citizens preferred to stay there.

The Bishop, who had riches beyond the dreams of avarice, said he wished to leave. Some Muslims asked Saladin to keep him and divide his riches amongst the Muslims, but he refused, saying. "It is impossible that I should perpetrate such a crime. I will take ten dinars from him and no more.

The savagery shown by Christians in Andalusia in the West was no less. After all the services which the Muslims had performed for Spain, the religious leaders of the victorious Christian army ordered the execution of every Muslim, old and young, woman and man, at the instigation of the Pope and of Philip II. Not one in four of the Muslims escaped the ensuing massacre.

Even some of these were dragged before the Inquisition and condemned for their beliefs. John Davenport writes (p.133; "Apology to Muhammad and the Qur'an"): "Who can fail to admire the chivalry shown by the Islamic rulers of Spain or to wonder at the monuments of civilisation, both architectural and cultural, which they have left behind them? And who can fail to feel shame at the conduct of Christians, the fanaticism and bigotry and ignorance and barbarism which brought torture and oppression in its train?"

Georgi Zeidan narrates that the Christian conquerors of Andalusia made Muslims, Jews and criminals carry labels to make them known to all men wherever they went: and even presented Muslims with a choice between accepting Christianity or dying (p.282 of the 4th volume of his "History of Islamic Civilisation"). He adds that the Christians turned Muslims' mosques into churches, deprived them of all freedom of religious observances, destroyed their cemeteries, stripped them of the necessities of existence, and smashed up their hammams.

In the time of Henry IV of Spain the 4,000 defenders of the town of Dulan were strangled by Christian hands. Such was the Christian understanding of the blessing proclaimed on peacemakers by the Messiah Himself? Is modern imperialism in our civilised world much better? Does it not tread underfoot the dignity and personality of those under its dominion, and



strip them of the benefits of its vaunted "civilisation"?

Does it not enslave mind and soul and spirit as much as the body of its underlings? In order to ensure its own profits, does it not suppress all freedom of thought amongst the masses, so that they may never even think of raising a finger against their tyrants, and so that any rising murmur of a demand for justice may be stifled before it can be heard? Let the great powers

mouth fine words about peace as they will.

When it comes to action they set all that idealism aside. Even their so-called diplomacy is merely an extension of their imperialistic aims. Idealists can do no more than draw pictures on water until moral conditions of peaceful coexistence are established worldwide in a family of nations.

The units of a social structure are individual men and women: a harmonious structure can only be built with individual persons in accord with each other and each at one with and within the self. Islam's primary endeavour is, therefore, to create that inner peace within individuals by filling hearts with the faith and conviction that sets the conscience at peace, and which streamlines all the gifts of brain and body in a harmony of joint action towards a God-given end. Islam applies faith practically, in such a way as to produce a world which runs aright. For this reason its second task is to guarantee an environment which will promote the certainty that justice prevails; and, by obviating threats to health and property, to make all feel secure.

Islam deprecates the exploitation of one class by another. Islam instead advocates co-operation and mutual aid in quiet neighbourliness and friendship. Islam propounds norms of behaviour and trains its citizens in serene living as these norms, practised, shape habits and customs. Of course, the frailty of human nature and the limitations of human ability, insight and purview, prevent these ideals from being always and everywhere realised Without error. Even the best of leaders can be so busied with one set of events that he fails to notice another series going awry, into error, division - even into violence and oppression. But the will to redress the wrong and put things right again is always there; and above all, God's guidance and illumination exist to enlighten consciences and inspire restitution, reminding all that they .will face their Judge at Doomsday