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Jihad

Pushpa Anbu SVD

Sadbhavana, Okhla, New Delhi

'Jihad' is one of the most misunderstood concepts today. Anyone, who is familiar with the situation of the world today, would probably make an attempt to understand the concept of Jihad. One of the questions that I am often confronted with, when I speak to others either in a classroom or a seminar hall, is about 'Holy war', as Jihad has been translated by western scholars. This is a complex reality. It is much more difficult to pass a religious judgement on 'holy war' (Jihad) and its moral acceptability than to understand the concept, as many scholars have distorted the idea of jihad. 'Was Islam spread at the point of the sword?' 'Was the Muslim emblem the Holy Quran or the sword?' 'Were the Muslim imperialists and rulers after mundane power or loot? These are some of the questions people often ask.

I think we should be frank enough to accept the fact that war is a necessary evil, and its existence is a fact of life whether we like it or not. Looking around, we wonder and are ashamed to find injustice, oppression, capricious ambitions, arbitrary claims, hatred and jealousy. To a great extent, people are fighting for justice and opposing all that is evil and oppressive. But the main

objective of Islam is not war, nor is it the normal course for the Muslims. According to Islam, war should be the last resort when all other measures fail. It is to be used only under extraordinary circumstances, as we shall see in the following pages.

The traditional Church teaching on the concept of a just war divided judgement into two areas: when is it justified to use force, "*jus ad bellum*?" and the principle guiding the use of force, "*jus in bello*" (Zenit News Agency Oct 03, 2001). For a war to be just, a number of criteria need to be satisfied: that there be a just cause; that the action be initiated by a legitimate authority; that it be guided by right intention; that the action do not produce more evil than the good sought; that it is the last resort; that there is a reasonable chance of success; and that the eventual outcome be the establishment of peace. Every action should focus on the preservation of peace.

The entire world was shaken up by the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. It reveals to us how fragile peace is, and how terrible the tragedy is when thousands of innocent lives are lost.

* Pushpa Anbu SVD can be contacted at: Sadbhavana, Church Complex, Masihgarh, Okhla, Post Box - 9747, New Delhi - 110 025. E-mail: sadbhav@ndb.vsnl.net.in

Abstract: 'Jihad' is one of the most misunderstood concepts today. Anyone, who is familiar with the situation of the world today, would probably make an attempt to understand the concept of Jihad. One of the questions that I am often confronted with, when I speak to others either in a classroom or a seminar hall, is about 'Holy war', as Jihad has been translated by western scholars. This is a complex reality. It is much more difficult to pass a religious judgement on 'holy war' (Jihad) and its moral acceptability than to understand the concept, as many scholars have distorted the idea of jihad. 'Was Islam spread at the point of the sword?' 'Was the Muslim emblem the Holy Quran or the sword?' 'Were the Muslim imperialists and rulers after mundane power or loot? These are some of the questions people often ask.

There is no religion in the world which does not stand for peace. In the general audience held the day after the attacks in the United States, Pope John Paul II declared, "In the face of such unspeakable horror we cannot but be deeply disturbed. I add my voice to all the voices raised in these hours to express indignant condemnation, and I strongly reiterate that the ways of violence will never lead to genuine solutions to humanity's problems."

Jihad as Understood

When we are faced with the problem of jihad, we need to understand the etymology of the term and its background. In my analysis I would bring out jihad as divinely sanctioned for the purpose of the defence and preservation of one's faith. It should also be kept in mind that jihad is to be understood from a religious point of view, as opposing vehemently any kind of idol worship and the association of any other gods with Allah (*Shirk*: the most unpardonable sin in Islam). By this act the spirit of the ideal Islamic religious community is preserved.

In the present time, generally 'Jihad' is understood as the divinely sanctioned obligation to wage war in Islamic tradition. The other common word used among the Muslims for fighting is 'qital' which means fighting in the path of Allah. Most of us associate 'jihad' with Islamic fundamentalism. It is considered to be the acts of the fundamentalists and fundamentalist groups we are quite familiar with these days.

This word jihad also evokes intense emotions in people. It is a term

frequently mentioned in the media, a topic for discussion among the scholars and religious and political leaders. In its original sense, the word jihad never had any connotation of 'fighting'. Etymologically the word is derived from 'jahd' or 'juhd' meaning ability, exertion or power, and jihad and mujahida mean exerting one's power in repelling the enemy. We have in the Holy Quran, "And to those who strive (strenuous) and fight in the cause of Allah with their goods and their persons, Allah has granted a grade higher than those who sit at home" (4:95). The word 'strive' or 'strenuous' is originally 'mojahid' from the word jihad. It means to do one's utmost, to make effort, to strive, to exert, to employ oneself diligently, studiously, sedulously, earnestly, zealously, or with energy (Cheragh 1977: 78). It clearly shows that the original meaning of jihad is not fighting or warfare. In the religious context it means the struggle against one's evil inclinations or an exertion for the sake of Islam and umma, community (Peters 1995: 1).

It is indeed a misconception that the word 'jihad' is supposed to be synonymous with war. Maulana Muhammad Ali quotes from the Encyclopaedia of Islam on Jihad as, "the spread of Islam by arms is a religious duty upon Muslims in general" (Muhammad Ali 1986: 60). So Jihad meant not only war, but war undertaken for the propagation of Islam. Considered a sacred duty on every Muslim and Muslim nation, jihad means fighting against unbelievers with the objective of either winning them over to Islam or subduing and exterminating them in case they refuse to become Muslims and

causing Islam to spread and triumph over all religions.

Islamic scholars hold the view that jihad is of three kinds. The first is against a visible enemy. A visible enemy could be anyone who harms Islamic faith and believers in Islamic tradition. Preservation of one's faith is the foremost duty of every Muslim. So they must not fail in this responsibility. If need be, it could be in an intense form, exerting one's ability and power either by word or deed. They consider it as a divinely sanctioned duty. The second kind of jihad is against the devil. Devils are constantly on the lookout for companionship and instigate the believers to fall into their trap. To such wicked acts of devils one should not give in, but rather constantly fight against these devils to preserve one's faith and purity. The final kind of jihad is against one's self (nafs). As human beings we are fragile and weak. We easily give in to our weaknesses. Islam teaches one to preserve one's self from all kinds of evil and strive for a better life here on earth and in the world to come. In short jihad is using or exerting one's power or ability in contending with an object of disapprobation (Muhammad Ali 1986: 70-72).

Jihad from Different Perspectives

The idea of a pan-Islamic movement was conceived and propagated by Jamaluddin Afghani (1838-1897). He said that all Muslims all over the world must unite under the slogan of 'Islamic Unity.' Muslims have an ideal state, therefore they are to unite and establish a Muslim State. Jihad is also to be viewed from this perspective. So the

idea of jihad is tied to the idea of the unity of the Islamic state against all non-Islamic states and the legitimacy of the caliph or imam as the single ruler of the Islamic State (Kelsay and Turner 1991: 37). Jihad can be declared only by the state headed by the legitimate caliph or imam. So the Islamic conception of jihad is inextricably tied to the notion of the unity of the Muslim community and its ruler.

The concept of victory and success was quite strong in the minds of the early Muslim rulers. The first caliph (successor of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)) Hazrat Abu Bakr was engaged in riddha wars (apostasy wars). He wanted to protect people from sins and vices and to liberate them. To a great extent, the reality of war shaped the attitude of the Muslims on the perspective of jihad. The Apocalyptic Tradition and popular attitudes toward war made Muslims take up arms and fight against infidels (Kelsay and Turner 1991: 42-26).

One of the fundamental beliefs and one of the five pillars of Islam is faith in the final judgement. Every person on the earth will be either rewarded or punished according to his/her deeds. Future life depends on the present course of action. This idea is quite strong among the Muslims. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) preached and believed as though the last judgement was very near and it would probably take place in his very lifetime. So the early Muslim community took it seriously and considered it their prime duty and responsibility to stamp out unbelief from the world. Jihad was meant to 'clean the world up' in preparation for

the impending final judgement (Kelsay and Turner 1991: 48). This is what Christians also did. They considered themselves to be 'soldiers of Christ', going about preaching and bearing witness to the Risen Christ.

Certain historical circumstances were important for the development of jihad in Islam. This was introduced to prove and legitimize the phenomenon of 'just war'. The early Christian martyrs had been witnesses and fighters in spirit, maintaining passivity in the face of suffering and death, thus associating themselves with Jesus' own life and death. Later the Crusades created a new crop of Christian martyrs whose supreme act of love consisted of dying while trying to kill their adversaries. In the Islamic tradition, too, the idea of martyrdom arose with the term 'shahid', which means both 'witness' and 'martyr' (Bonner 1996: 2). It is one who dies fighting the enemies of God, whose defining attribute is his reward. By this act one becomes a true witness.

Ideological Concepts of Jihad

In Islamic history, the doctrine of jihad was of paramount importance. It was looked upon as a means of establishing a just Islamic state ruled by Islamic shariah. It was based on the experience of Prophet Muhammad. At the time of persecution in Mecca, the Prophet (SAW) together with his companions migrated to Medina in 622 A.D., which is called hijra. So the call to jihad was accompanied by a call for emigration.

Jihad can also be interpreted in the realm of eschatology. The concept of

Mahdi (rightly guided one) is strongly believed by the Muslims. The Mahdi is considered to be a hidden imam, a true leader preserved by Allah, who will appear at the appointed time and bring in the reign of justice, peace and truth and put an end to corruption and oppression. In this context we have the example of a few Mahdis who came up and fought against colonial dominion: Ubayd Allah (d.930 A.D) the founder of the Fatimid dynasty, Ibn Tumart(1077-1130) the founder of the Almohad dynasty; in India Abd al-Rahman (1810 in Surat), and Muhammad Ahmad (d. 1855) in Sudan (Peters 1979: 43). Many leaders strongly fought against any kind of dominion over the Muslims by non-Muslims. There had been a strong resistance to colonialism and dominance of the British in India and Egypt, against the French in Algeria, the Italians in Libya. Thus jihad is the struggle for the good of the Muslim society and against corruption and any kind of decadence. It is highly encouraged that all Muslims join hands to achieve this goal. They are to take part in this struggle and work with all their intellectual and material abilities for the realization of justice and equality between the peoples for the promotion of security and human understanding, both among individuals and groups (Peters 1991: 161).

Jihad thus provided a suitable ideology to resist all foreign, non-Muslim, domination. In India the modernist approach to Jihad had the following tendencies: the desire for a rapprochement between the Indian Muslims and the British, the wish to reform Islam in order to remove religious impediments for

the adoption of western culture and finally the need to defend Islam against ideological attacks from the west (Peters 1991: 162). But in modern India, the notion of jihad was very restrictive, as it was confined to wars of defence against religious oppression. We know from history that in some countries, for example Egypt, jihad had meant the struggle against all kinds of oppression, irrespective of whether it was religious or political. So jihad came to be against colonialism, Zionism and communalism.

In the course of time, new trends emerged with regard to the understanding of Jihad. Jihad became a 'permanent revolutionary struggle' for the propagation of Islam, in order to 'liberate humankind'. There is also an opinion among some Muslims that one cannot apply categories like 'offensive' or 'defensive' to the concept of jihad. Jihad as a struggle for the propagation of Islam is good in itself and need not be justified by moral values that are alien to Islam. Thus the concept of Jihad should be looked at from different perspectives and angles. One should follow certain norms and regulations. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is the model and example to all Muslims. The Prophet (SAW) had his mission and carried it out faithfully. He was a messenger of peace, a prophet, a lawgiver, religious leader, a chief judge, a commander of the army and a head of the state. He exercised both religious and political leadership. He preached peace, he put an end to distress, gave firm principles concerning every walk of life, gave strict warning against corruption, injustice and mental sluggishness. So the Holy

Prophet (SAW) has to be followed all the time and in all matters.

Jihad and the Holy Quran

Quran is considered to be the 'living voice' by the Muslims. It is the Holy Book highly revered by the Muslims. It is the book of directives showing humankind how one should live and be successful in this life and in the life to come. Muslims find in the Holy Quran solution to all their problems – political, religious, ethical and social. It is their strong belief that Quran is the literal word of Allah and should be respected and followed by every Muslim on earth. It has been their guiding force all through the centuries.

We do have references to Jihad in the Holy Quran. The references are of quite a wide range, so that one can easily misunderstand the verses. There are a few so-called 'war verses'. We cannot consider these 'war verses' in isolation and make a judgement. We should be able to place these verses in the proper context and situation and understand them accordingly. There are verses which are for total restraint, while there are verses which prescribe total war. The Quranic view of jihad can be traced through a number of stages (Lazar 2001). At the initial stage when the Holy Prophet (SAW) was in Mecca, his followers were very few and were living in a hostile situation. At this time we do not have any reference in the Holy Quran, authorizing the followers to fight in support or defence of religious belief or otherwise. Later when Prophet (SAW) migrated to Madina, revelations sanctioned fighting as a means of de-

fence against the aggression of the Meccan adversaries (22:39-40). It was only later that we get references which enjoined attack against the opponents of Islam at all times and in all places. Let us in detail analyze some of the verses on Jihad in the Sacred Scripture, the Holy Quran.

In the Quran the word Jihad is used in the sense of exerting one's power or ability without implying war. "Those who strive in our cause, we will guide them to our paths. Verily Allah is with those who do right" (29:69). Here the word used for strive is jahada, and the Arabic word Jahada is derived from jihad. In this case it means the spiritual striving to attain nearness to God, and the result of this jihad is God's guiding force behind those who walk in His ways. It is quite clear that here jihad is meant for one's personal and spiritual growth and not to be misused for any other purpose. We also have another verse from the Holy Quran to enumerate this aspect. "Whoever strives hard (jihad), he strives only for his own soul, that is, for his own benefit for Allah is self-sufficient (free of all needs from all creatures)" (29:6).

We read in the Holy Quran, "And strive in His cause as you ought to strive with sincerity and under discipline" (22:78). Again we read, "Therefore listen not to unbelievers, but strive against them with the utmost sternness with the Holy Quran" (25:52). In both the references mentioned above, jihad is enjoined. In the first verse it is the nearness to Allah and in the second jihad is to be carried on against unbelievers, as mentioned in the Quran. But this jihad

is not of the sword but of the Holy Quran, that is by the weapon of Allah's revelation. In fact we have many references to this kind of jihad. Initially this is what jihad meant. Unfortunately today the meaning of jihad is misunderstood by the Muslims as well as by others.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) received the revelation as, "O Prophet! Strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is hell, an evil refuge indeed!" (9:73 and 66:9). The Prophet (SAW) received this revelation twice indicating the importance of the real meaning of jihad. So jihad is to be carried on by means of the Holy Quran as expressed in the Holy Quran (25:52).

Islam is a missionary religion like Christianity. Its followers do advocate, preach and propagate their religion. But the remark made on the religious fervour such as, 'the spread of Islam by force' has no reference in the Holy Quran. "Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error. Whoever rejects anything other than Allah and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks" (2:256). We have no reference in the Holy Quran with regard to the permission for war in the spread of Islam. Many scholars, including D.B. Macdonald, the writer of the article on jihad in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, question the validity of such statements. Much more so, there is nothing either in the Holy Quran or Hadith (traditions of the Prophet) to corroborate such views and ideas. There seems to be a

struggle between preconceived ideas and an actual knowledge of facts.

We read in the Holy Quran, “To those against whom war is made, permission is given to fight because they are wronged and verily Allah is most powerful for their aid” (22: 39 and 40). This revelation is a Madinese revelation. It is not to be understood as a general permission to make war with such people in general, but only with people who made war on the believers and the reason stated is ‘because they are oppressed or wronged.’ The wrong is indicated as: ‘driven by persecution from their home, for no other reason than that they worshipped the One true Allah’. It was in this sense, jihad is to be understood. As stated further on, if war had not been allowed under such circumstances, there would be no peace on earth, no religious duty would be performed and no place of worship would exist (Muhammad 1986: 554).

Jihad then became a necessary alternative to the growing religious tension, fundamentalism and religious intolerance. Jihad with such pure motive is a struggle carried on simply with the aim that truth may prosper and that freedom of conscience may be maintained. Quran 2:190 reads: “Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you. But do not transgress limits; for Allah loves not the transgressors.” Just war is permissible only as self-defence and under well-defined limits. Fighting in self-defence is called fighting in the way of Allah, because fighting in defence is the noblest and just of all causes. When undertaken, it must be pushed with vigour, not relentlessly, but only to restore

peace and freedom for the worship of Allah. Limits should never be transgressed. Women, children, the old and the infirm men and women should not be maltreated, trees and crops should not be cut down and peace should prevail when the enemy comes to an agreement.

There are certain clear-cut norms to be followed. Muslims should not attack first. They should fight only with those who fight with them; aggression is strictly prohibited. There is a mention of fighting with the idolaters in chapter 9 of the Holy Quran. But even here, one should not understand it as in an inclusive way, but only with those who broke the agreement and attacked the Muslims. “The pagans wherever you find them, seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratum of war” (9:5).

There are certain verses, which are totally misunderstood. It happens when some one tries to analyze the verses of the Quran without any reference to the context and the situation. There are so called ‘verses of the sword’ such as “But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay” (9:5), and “And kill them wherever you find them” (2:191). In both the cases the order to fight is given only against those who have taken up the sword and attack the Muslims first. So the ‘verse of the sword’ refers only to people “who broke their oaths and aimed at the expulsion of the Prophet (SAW) (9:10).

“Fight with them until there is no persecution and religion should be only for Allah, but if they desist, then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors” (2:193). In this verse, ‘reli-

gion should be only for Allah' should not be understood as everyone should accept Islam and become Muslims. The Arabic word, Din, is comprehensive. It implies the ideas of indebtedness, duty, obedience, judgment, justice, faith, religion, customary rites.... Religion is to be treated as a matter of relationship between God and humans, a matter of conscience, in which others have no right to interfere.

Even during the time of war, if needed, peace is to be recommended. We have in the Holy Quran, "But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou also incline towards peace and trust in Allah" (8:61). So there is a clear understanding and real thirst for peace. "O ye who believe! Violate not the sanctity of the rites of Allah, ... Nor people resorting to the sacred house, shutting you out of the sacred Mosque, lead you to transgression. Help one another in righteousness and piety, not in sin and rancour, fear Allah" (5:2). Again in 5:8 we have, "let not the hatred of others make you swerve. Be just; that is next to piety and fear of Allah."

From the Quranic revelation we understand the concept of jihad, which is being widely misunderstood by a large number of people. No doubt that Islam proves itself to be a monotheistic religion, and the preservation of monotheism becomes the prime responsibility of every Muslim. From this idea, emerged another concept of jihad which is to destroy idolaters. Our Muslim friends take pride in their monotheism. They are ready to go to any extent to preserve monotheism. So there is no

room to consider jihad as a militant act or a terrorist act.

Jihad and Hadith

The science of Hadith is related to the life of the Prophet (SAW). Hadith means to say something or describe something. It includes deeds, actions, utterances and silent approvals and disapprovals of the Prophet (SAW). Hadith is one of the sources of sharia, in which the sayings and actions of the Prophet (SAW) are recorded. Next to the Holy Quran, Hadith plays a vital role in shaping the life of the Muslim community.

As we have seen in the Holy Quran, so also in Hadith, jihad is not used exclusively for fighting. For example, the Prophet called the hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) Jihad. The Holy Prophet (SAW) said, 'The hajj is the most excellent of all jihads' (Bu. 25:4). He stressed the importance of inner purification and spiritual enrichment. Hajj is one of the religious duties enjoined on every Muslim who is an adult, having good physical and mental health and who can bear the expense and also maintain the family. It is an effort made to come closer to Allah and receive his blessing.

According to the Prophet (SAW), the objective of Islam is not war, it is the religion of peace. But the pertinent question remains, "Why did Muhammad launch wars and command battles?" Historical background reveals that the Prophet (SAW) was constantly attacked by the Meccans. He could no longer stand the persecution and threats. Families were separated, properties were confiscated,

blood was shed, and the people were forced to leave their homelands. At this juncture the Prophet (SAW) had no other option than to fight against them. It may be a paradox. The Prophet (SAW) assured his followers of dignity and strength, freedom and security, and tried ally them with God. But unfortunately they were oppressed, subjected to terror and helpless. It is in this context that the revelation came, "To those against whom war is made, permission is given to fight, because they are wronged... God will aid those who aid His cause; for verily God is full of strength" (22:38-41).

This was the beginning of the war against the infidels. So the reason to take up arms is entirely different from the misconception that prevails among the non-Muslim scholars. There are also others who are of the opinion that Islam was spread by force. But anything that is forced cannot have a lasting effect. Islam has survived all these years and it is one of the major religions of the world today. The opinion that Islam was spread out of a passionate lust for plunder is yet another misconception.

Jihad in Hadith includes any form of service. Faith in Islam includes devotion to Allah, love of Allah and service to humanity. Islam as a religion of peace strives to bring humanity under the banner of love, peace and justice. The Prophet (SAW) spent his entire life for the cause of his people. As a proponent of peace, he went about doing good for the people. Amir Ali remarks about the life of the Prophet, "His life is the noblest record of the work nobly and faithfully performed." Again, "His achievement is that within a span of the

mortal life the Prophet (SAW) called forth out of the unpromising material, a nation never united before. He ameliorated the condition of the downtrodden by his own life" says Prof. Hitti. The Encyclopedia Britannica says, "Of all the religious personalities of the world, Muhammad (SAW) was the most successful." The success of the Prophet lies in his service, unswerving faith, strict honesty and sincerity, naked truthfulness, firm determination, sharp intelligence, tolerant and peaceful habits, full-hearted sympathy for the poor and the needy and the destitute, and the heart-winning manner in which he treated all those he came in contact with. Every Muslim is invited to follow the Prophet (SAW) intimately and personally.

According to Prophet Muhammad (SAW), people belonging to his community should be men of learning who disseminate the truth and are engaged in the propagation of faith. It does not consist of any fighters or warriors. So in this sense jihad is used as an invitation to Islam, to follow the teaching of the Holy Quran and learn from the life of the Prophet.

From the life of the Prophet (SAW) we come to know that Islam was not meant to be spread by force of arms as we have also learnt from the Holy Quran. Muslims are the ones who have experienced peace and entered into peace. They are people through whom others find themselves secure concerning their life and property. From the life of the Prophet (SAW) we understand that fighting in the cause of justice, fighting to help the oppressed, fighting

in self-defence, and fighting for national existence are all considered to be the highest and the noblest of deeds. In all these cases a man lays down his life in the cause of truth and justice, and that is the highest sacrifice a man can offer in his life.

Quoting Amir Ali's 'Spirit of Islam,' with regard to the direction relating to war, Maulana Muhammad Ali mentions, "In avenging the injuries inflicted upon us, molest not the harmless inmates of domestic seclusion; spare women; injure not the infants at the breast or those who are ill in bed. Abstain from demolishing the dwellings of the unresisting inhabitants, destroy not the means of their subsistence, not the fruit trees; touch not the palms" (Muhammad 1986: 585). Abu Bakr, the first caliph (successor to the Prophet (SAW)) seem to have given the following instruction to the commander of an army in the Syrian battle: "When you meet your enemies, acquit yourselves like men, and do not turn your backs; and if you gain victory kill not the little children, not old people, not women... As you go on, you will find some religious persons that live retired in monasteries, who propose themselves to serve Allah that way. Leave them alone, and neither kill them nor destroy their monasteries" (Muhammad Ali 1986: 587).

From what has been said so far, we get a clear idea of Jihad. The purpose of Jihad is not destructive but constructive. Again and again we find references from Hadith that the Holy Prophet never allowed his followers to take up arms aimlessly and exceed the

limits. He always asked them to be faithful and tolerant.

There is a tradition which states: "I have been ordered to fight her people until they profess that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad (SAW) is the messenger of Allah, perform the salah (prayers) and pay zakat (almsgiving). If they do so, their life and property are inviolable for me, unless when the law of Islam permits it to be taken and they will be responsible towards Allah" (Peters 1995: 14). It is a collective duty and recommended act too for all Muslims. Jihad is meant for Islamic unity. According to tradition, the Prophet wanted that by means of jihad there would be personal spiritual enrichment and the community would be brought together under the safe guidance of the Islamic State. Once again we find no reference to fight in the traditions of the Prophet (SAW).

Jihad and Jurisprudence

In the Islamic terminology, this is known as Sharia or fiqh. Sharia is the canon law of Islam revealed in the Quran by Allah, by Prophet (SAW) in Hadith, which was communicated to later generations. It is law dealing with the wisdom of society. Sharia or fiqh helps men and women to lead a good life on this earth and prepare themselves for a happy future. It reminds them of their duties towards God, others and themselves.

We shall now try to understand the concept of jihad in Sharia. For the first time jihad was used in the narrower sense of qital (fighting) by the jurists. The jurists used the word jihad as syn-

onymous with qital. In the course to time, the meaning was further narrowed down to mean that the Muslims were called to fight against the unbelieving nations and countries whether they attacked or not. This idea is quite different from the concept that we find in the Holy Quran. Probably such a concept may have come in course of time, when Islam had to confront other religions of the world and people of different nature and temperaments.

In this context the assumption was that the unity of the Islamic community is not only based on religious unity but also political unity, which means ruled by a single Islamic government headed by the caliph or imam. By this concept, the unified Islamic State was considered to be different from all other states. Efforts were then made to bring about unity and uniformity. Even in this unifying effort certain norms and regulations had to be followed. It is not to be carried on at random.

By the end of the second century AH, the juristic tradition developed the notion of dar al-Islam (abode of Islam) and dar-al-harb (abode of war) (Kelsay 1991: 50). It is an expression of political dichotomy. This kind of division is closely linked with the concept of Jihad. Some say that there is a third category known as dar al-sulh or dar al-'ahd (abode of treaty). According to this category the inhabitants pay kharraj which is like poll tax and it is obligatory for them to pay this amount. Otherwise they will have to accept Islam and the land will also be taken over by the Muslims.

Some define jihad in fiqh as 'smaller jihad' whereas the 'greater

jihad' denotes a more spiritual activity like fighting one's evil inclinations or studying the fiqh, exerting oneself as much as one can. Others distinguish different kinds and aspects of jihad such as 'jihad of the heart', which means struggle against one's sinful inclination; 'jihad of the tongue', which means ordering what is good and forbidding what is evil; 'jihad of the hand' which means administering disciplinary measures by the rulers and kings in order to prevent people from committing abominable acts and finally 'jihad of the sword,' that is, fighting the unbelievers for the sake of Islam (Peters 1995: 10). The direct purpose of jihad is the strengthening of Islam, protection the believers and ridding the earth of unbelief.

As far as Jihad in fiqh is concerned, we find a clear direction to jihad and the reasons for jihad and different ways in which one can involve oneself in jihad. Jihad is considered to be a religious and a noble endeavour. Every Muslim is called to be purified by means of Jihad. Fiqh gives them the direction and orientation towards a better life.

Conclusion

From what has been said so far, it is clear that Jihad is a complex ideology which is often misunderstood. In no way does Quranic Islam propagate violence among its believers. Islam does not justify violence. There seems to be a wide gap between the ideal and the real and between theory and practice. Muslim scholars and intellectuals, and for that matter, every genuine and God-fearing Muslim, should make

every effort to bridge this gap. Jihad, as we find it in the Holy Quran, Hadith and fiqh, is a well-defined ideology, an aid to understand the Islamic way of life and a practical source of how-to-live-life. A serious search into this concept would shed light on the personal life of individuals.

However, one is also alarmed at the way Jihad has become the lived experience of some of the followers. They decide on their own and act irresponsibly. Evil tendencies also creep into the minds of the people. Jihad is used as a

means to justify their wrong deeds. If only Jihad could be understood well, it could achieve its noble purpose. If the followers are serious about the idea of Jihad in their practical life, Islamic Tradition could bear much fruit. It is indeed my conviction, that if Jihad is carried out legitimately with prudence and wisdom, it can contribute to the growth of society and the stability of the human race. Or else it would only be destructive of human progress, religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

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