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# Editorial

Never more so than now have we witnessed such polarisation between the Islamic world and the west. A cursory glance at contemporary politics also shows polarisation even within the Islamic world as Muslims remain divided from one another on the basis of misunderstood and poorly reasoned doctrine. This was prophesied by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he said:

‘A time will come when my followers will be divided into seventy-three sects. All except one of them will deserve the Fire’.

*(Tirmidhi)*

One of the most misunderstood concepts is that of Jihad. For this reason, articles on this subject have been regularly printed in *The Review of Religions*. The current edition contains excerpts from the writings of the

Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> which explain that Jihad as a means of propagating Islam is clearly forbidden.

‘Do not be misled by the notion that in the beginning the Muslims were commanded to take up the sword. That sword was not taken up for the spread of the faith, but in self-defence against the enemies of Islam and for the purpose of establishing peace and security’

*(Jihad the true Islamic concept)*

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II<sup>(ra)</sup> writes:

‘The current view of Jihad which is nothing but violence and lawlessness has been borrowed by Muslims from others. ...It is not even known in Islam. Strange as it may seem, the responsibility for the spread of this view among Muslims lies with Christians who are the loudest in their condemnation of Islam for its

supposed teaching of Jihad'.  
(*Invitation to Ahmadiyyat*)

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II<sup>(ra)</sup> cites the Crusades as the origin of the concept of 'religious wars' which then became incorporated into Muslim thinking.

'So completely do they [Muslims] seem to have assimilated the Christian example that Christians themselves have started raising objections.' Muslims fail to see through this 'Christian' game. Unwittingly, they continue to supply the enemies of Islam with texts and arguments to use against Islam.'  
(*ibid*)

In his article 'Jihad, human rights and the treatments of minorities in Islam, Mr Ashraf explores the divisions in contemporary Muslim thinking today and discusses how they have contributed to the inaccurate concept of Jihad held by Muslims and non-Muslims alike in spite of the clear teachings of

the Holy Qur'an and the practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup>.

The Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> was asked who were the Muslims who would be on the side of True Islam? He replied, 'those who follow my example and the example of my Companions. He also instructed, 'Knowledge disappears from the earth when those who have knowledge disappear from the earth.'  
(*Mishquat, Babul I'atasam bis Sunnah.*)

This hadith refers to a time when it would seem as if knowledge had disappeared from the world. However, when this time arrives there would remain a party from among the Muslims, which would still adhere to the true Islam. This group of people would follow the example of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and his companions. The only sect today who does this is made up of the followers of the Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup>.

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# JIHAD – The True Islamic Concept

The Concept of Jihad in Islam has been a subject of great controversy in recent years. The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, clearly stated more than one hundred years ago that, according to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), use of force is totally forbidden in matters of faith. Below, we are presenting a few excerpts from his writings.

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## Islam is Propagated through its Inherent Qualities

No true Muslim has ever believed that Islam should be spread by the sword. Islam has always been propagated through its inherent qualities. Those calling themselves Muslims, who seek to spread Islam by means of the sword, are not aware of its inherent qualities and their conduct resembles the conduct of wild beasts.

*(Tiryaaq-ul-Qulub, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol.15, p.167, footnote, 1902)*

The Holy Qur'an clearly forbids the use of force for the spread of the faith and directs its propagation through its inherent qualities and the good example of the Muslims. Do not be misled

by the notion that in the beginning the Muslims were commanded to take up the sword. That sword was not taken up for the spread of the faith, but in self-defence against the enemies of Islam and for the purpose of establishing peace and security. It was no part of the purpose of taking up the sword to have recourse to coercion in the matter of faith.

*(Sitarah Qaisariyyah, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol.15, p.120-121, 1899)*

## The Promised Messiah Will Not Fight Disbelievers with the Sword

The commonly held doctrine professed by some of the divines that the Promised Messiah will descend from heaven, and will

fight the disbelievers, and will not accept the poll tax, and will offer only the choice of death or Islam, is utterly false. It is brimful of all types of error and mischief, and is utterly opposed to the Holy Qur'an and is only an invention of the impostors.

*(Nur-ul-Haq, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 8, p. 67, 1894)*

### **Concept of Jihad**

I have already written books in Urdu, Persian and Arabic, in which I have proved that the popular concept of Jihad prevalent among Muslims, such as the expectation of a bloodthirsty Imam and cultivation of malice for others, are no more than false notions harboured by short-sighted clerics. Islam, on the contrary, does not allow the use of the sword in religion except in the case of defensive wars, wars that are waged to punish a tyrant, or those which are meant to uphold freedom. The need of a defensive war arises only when the aggression of an adversary threatens one's life. Except for these three kinds of Jihad per-

mitted by the Shari'ah – Islamic Law – no other kind of war is allowed by Islam in support of religion. To highlight this concept of Jihad, I have distributed books in this country and in Arabia, Syria and Khurasan, etc., at great cost.

*(Masih Hindustan Mein, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 15, pp.4-5, 1908)*

### **Islam Does Not Permit Taking Up Arms as Rebels**

It should also be remembered that Islam permits the taking up of the sword only in opposition to people who themselves take it up first, and it permits the slaughter only of those who embark upon slaughter first. It does not lay down that the Muslims, while they are the subjects of a non-Muslim sovereign who deals with them with justice and equity, should take up arms against him as rebels. According to the Holy Qur'an this is the way of the wicked and not of the righteous.

*(Anjam-e-Atham, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 11, p. 37, 1897)*

## The Promised Messiah Came to Put an End to War

The doctrine of Jihad as understood and propagated by the Muslim divines of this age who are called maulvis is utterly incorrect. It can lead to nothing, except that, by their forceful preaching they would convert common people into wild beasts and would deprive them of all the good qualities of human beings; and so it has happened. I know for certain that the burden of the sins of those people who commit murders through ignorance on account of such preaching, and who are unaware of the reason why Islam had to fight battles in its early stages, lies on the necks of these maulvis who go on propagating secretly these dangerous doctrines which result in such grievous loss of life...

It is written that when the Promised Messiah appears, Jihad by the sword and all fighting for religion will come to an end, as he will not take up the sword or any other earthly weapon. His only instrument will be his supplications, and his only

weapon will be his firm determination. He will lay the foundation of peace and will gather the goat and the lion together. His age will be the age of peace and kindness and human sympathy. Why do these people not reflect upon the fact that thirteen hundred years ago the Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had said concerning the Promised Messiah: He will put an end to war?

*(Government Angrezi Aur Jihad, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 17 pp. 7-8, 1900)*

Friends! Abandon the thoughts of 'Jihad' warfare now; It is now forbidden to go to war for the sake of your faith.

The Messiah who is the religious leader of the faith has come;

Now is the end of all wars of violence for faith.

The light of God is now descending from heavens; It is now futile to issue an edict for battle and fighting.

Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)

– the Chosen Prophet – had clearly stated that;  
When the Second Advent of Jesus Christ takes place, he would put a halt to fighting.  
*(Tuhfah-Golarviyah, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 17, p. 77, 1902)*

My dear! The way to support faith is quite different!  
Not that you draw the sword if someone disagrees!  
Why do you need to draw the sword to support your faith?  
What survives on bloodshed cannot be faith.  
*(Tiryag-ul-Qulub, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 15, p.132, 1902)*

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## Divine Guidance - Part III

On 27th December 1901 Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup> of Qadian, India, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, addressed the large gathering of people who had come from different parts of the country. Presented below is the third part of translation of the address delivered on that day. The original Urdu text has been taken from *Malfoozat*, Volume 3, pp.156-163.



**The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup>.**

In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

His claim constitutes the basis of the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community.

[Translator's Note: All references to the verses of the Holy Qur'an are given in Arabic as they occur in the text. The English translation, presented in italics, is taken from the translation of the Holy Qur'an by Hadhrat Maulvi Sher Ali Sahib<sup>(ra)</sup>. Where the Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> has himself stated a certain interpretation of the Arabic verse, this is incorporated in the main body of the text].

*Translated by Amatul-Hadi Ahmad*

My purpose at present is only to draw your attention towards the second proof that God Almighty has provided for the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> that he was completely successful in fulfilling the mission for which he had come.



As I stated earlier, when the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> came he found the ‘patients’ to be at the terminal stage of their ‘illness’. It was an illness that had taken the patients close to [spiritual] death were they not already ‘dead’ and this fact may be verified from the history of the time. Ponder fairly and justly over this, that it is difficult enough a task to correct the shortcomings of even one person in one’s service How great must be the work of the one who reforms a whole nation that had gone astray and does so in such a way that it seems as if the previous shortcomings never existed? What greater proof of the truth of such a person can there possibly be?

It is with regret that one has to state that Muslims have failed to pay any attention to the facts that provide such clear proofs that are rarely to be found with other Prophets. For instance, when we compare the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> with the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup>, it is regrettable to note that the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> [according to the Gospels] was unable to reform even a handful

of disciples, having frequently to remind them of the weakness of their faith, even referring to one as the devil. Their greed was such that one of them, Judas, who was the treasurer of the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup>, would at times take some coins from the bag of money that had been entrusted to him. Ultimately, it was this greed that led him to betray his master and teacher for thirty pieces of silver. On the other hand, when we look at the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup>, we see that they considered it better to give up their lives than to display even a minute particle of betrayal. European historians are forced to acknowledge that the love, loyalty and obedience shown by the Companions of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> towards him is such that the like of it is not to be found among the followers of any other Prophet. The Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> is especially lacking in this regard but his own status has been excessively exaggerated and despite weakness and numerous examples of events that are to be found in the Gospels, he has been made into a

god. The strength of his spiritual power and its attraction and absorption has been portrayed in such a way that it could not reform even a handful of disciples – what more could possibly be expected? Unable to account for the spiritual weakness of the disciples and their deeds, the Christians argue that the power and strength was attained by them *after* the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> and that they then became exemplary. However, such a response is not worthy of serious consideration as it is a case of [the saying] ‘excuse for sin being worse than the sin itself’. It is like saying that there is no light when the lamp is lit but after the lamp has gone out, there is light – what an irrational argument this is! [The Christian argument that the disciples] could not become purified in the presence of a Prophet but achieved this afterwards, would only serve to indicate that the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> was even weaker and at a lower level of spiritual strength [than would be suggested otherwise]. God forbid, this would be as if it were

a ‘curse’ in that for as long as Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> was with the disciples they could not attain purity but when it was removed, they became immersed in the Holy Ghost - this would be strange indeed!

Many English commentators have also written about this subject and have expressed the view that the people the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> had around him were a people who were already acquainted with the purpose of the Torah and they were used to hearing about the word of God from the Pharisees and the Scribes. It would, therefore, not have been a strange thing had these people been pious and righteous. For a period of one thousand and four hundred years, Prophets and Messengers came to them on a regular basis and informed them about the laws and limits set by God. It was, in fact the case that there was placed within them the seed of obedience to God and respect of the limits set by God and of the importance of abstention from evil deeds. How then was it

**WESTERN COMMENTATORS HAVE HAD TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT IF THE QUR'AN HAD NOT COME, THE STATE OF AFFAIRS WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY SERIOUS INDEED. THEY HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE HOLY PROPHET<sup>(sa)</sup> REFORMED PEOPLE WHO HAD BECOME LIKE BEASTS AND ANIMALS AND THEREAFTER HE PREPARED SUCH TRUTHFUL AND FAITHFUL PEOPLE WHO HELD THE HOLY PROPHET<sup>(sa)</sup> SO DEAR THAT THEY DID NOT CARE ABOUT THEIR OWN LIVES OR POSSESSIONS.**

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possible that the people who were around the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> should be unaware of the teaching he would have wanted to convey to them?

Even if the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> had been successful in reforming the people around him, it would not have been considered as something meriting great acclaim because if a person cures a patient after a physician has undertaken a complete diagnosis and treatment, it is not something that would be considered worthy of much praise. Hence, if we assume that the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> did have some beneficial [reforming] effect even then it would not be worthy of much praise but regrettably there does not appear

any example of the [reforming] benefit in any case. Judas sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver and Peter stood before him and cursed him. In comparison there is the example of the Companions of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> who in the battles of *Uhad* and *Badr* gave up their lives [for the sake of protecting their Master<sup>(sa)</sup>]. The point that needs to be justly considered here is that had the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> not appeared and if the Holy Qur'an did not exist what, in all fairness, would be said of a Prophet the example of whose teaching and spiritual power were Judas and Peter? Such is the level of spiritual power and the teaching [as found in the Gospels] so incomplete and

deficient that no wise person can call it perfect. Moreover, the human social, civic and political life bears no relation to it at all – add to this the remarkable fact that it causes no effect. The claim that is made [for the Messiah as god] is, therefore, totally against intelligence, conscience, laws of nature, rules of precedence and the generally accepted facts.

Western commentators have had to acknowledge that if the Qur'an had not come, the state of affairs would have been very serious indeed. They have acknowledged that the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> reformed [people who had become like] beasts and animals and thereafter he prepared such truthful and faithful people who held the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> so dear that they did not care about their own lives or possessions. Such loyalty, obedience, affection and sacrifice of one's own life cannot be created unless there is within the leader and the followers a high level of spiritual power and attraction. A western commentator adds that the Arabs were not

only taught real truthfulness but their mental capacities were also reformed and guided. The disciples [of the Messiah] could not have organised a small village but the Companions of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> showed their capability by organising a whole world. Who can say that the parents of Abu Bakr and Umar had experience of ruling over a country and that was how Abu Bakr and Umar came to possess such skills? This certainly was not the case. Their skills arose only from the guidance and reformation brought about by the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and by the complete teaching of the Holy Qur'an. Thus, on the one hand the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> transformed his Companions into angels and on the other they became an embodiment of wisdom.

It is a very clear and evident fact that the physician that cures an apparently incurable patient is hailed as a great physician but what would be said of someone who refuses to acknowledge such greatness, except that he is foolish and without sense. Our

Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> cured thousands of ‘sick’ people whose lives were entrenched in sin and each one of the patients was afflicted with multiple illnesses – as, for example, an ill person might say that he has headache as well as cataract, dropsy, gout and spleen problems and so on and so forth. The physician that heals such a patient would have to be acknowledged as being truly skilful, expert and great. Similarly, the ‘sick’ people that the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> cured, suffered from numerous spiritual ‘illnesses’. The more we ponder over their weaknesses and sins and then upon the radical change that was brought about in their condition after accepting Islam, the more we have to acknowledge the great and elevated status of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and the great strength of his spiritual power. Haughty stubbornness is another matter; it removes the capacity to see the light of truth, but should a heart not be bereft of the sense of justice and the mind possess some intelligence, such a one would have to acknowledge that no one has lived on this earth

who brought about a greater reformation towards purity than did the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam.

Against this we ask whom did the Messiah cure? What miraculous example is there of his own spirituality, courage and spiritual power? Mere verbal claims do not by themselves serve any purpose unless there are accompanying examples in practice. In view of the great exaggeration about the status of the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> that despite his [human] weakness and powerlessness he has been given the status of god, it is necessary that it is proved that his blessing had some efficacious results and that through his own powers a new example had been presented whereby the life of sins was brought to an end and the world was filled with angelic people. Instead, what we see is that very few people stayed with him and even the few that remained in his company were not reformed. Christians like to present a comparison between the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> and the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup>. Strangely, how-

ever, they do not like to carry out this kind of comparison [of reformation of followers] and they do so quite unashamedly. However, if they were to compare the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> with the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> in the [efficacy of their powers to bring about spiritual reform in their followers], they would realise [the true nature of the issue].

Remember that Prophets come to prove the [reality of the Divine command] to create within oneself the characteristics of Allah and through their practice they illustrate the fact that their character is an example of the ‘character of God’. It is obvious that all the things that God has created are beneficial for man from one aspect or another. For instance, the tree, its leaves, its shade, its bark, its wood, its fruit, in fact all its elements are beneficial in one way or another. Man gains many benefits from the light of the sun. In short, all things are of this nature: useful and beneficial for man. However, we regret the situation of the Christians in that they have

turned a humble mortal into God and the son of God but they cannot prove to the world any benefit of this. They can present no manifestation of his omnipotence when it should have been the case that their ‘son of God’ should have been a proof of the saying, ‘what the Father was unable to finish, the Son completed’. When we consider his life [according to the Gospels], we have to say, regretfully, that he did not achieve anything. [According to Christian belief he gave up his life]; however, giving up one’s life to alleviate the suffering of others is not an act of wisdom or expediency. What possible benefit can it bring to the suffering people?

Justice and faith require that in comparison to the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>, the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> should be viewed as being totally without achievement because in reality the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> did not have the opportunity that the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> was granted, this being the Messiah’s misfortune and the reason why we cannot

claim that he was a perfect exemplar.

There are two aspects of the completeness of a person's faith. Firstly, we need to see what kind of relationship he has with God in times of difficulty and tribulation. Does such a person accept the will of God with sincerity, true faithfulness and steadfastness? Does he persevere patiently without complaint, while continuing to praise and worship God Almighty? Secondly, at the time of his success and abundance does he forget God? Does there appear an objectionable change in him or is it the case that his relationship with God remains the same and he praises God and worships Him, and being magnanimous towards them, forgives his enemies thus providing proof of his elevated characteristics of kindness and courage? Why should it be the case that a person is attacked but he is not in a position to retaliate and take revenge? His non-retaliation is an act that cannot come under the category of high moral qualities

of forgiveness and patience because he does not possess any power. Indeed, the example of powerlessness [of the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup>] is like that of a person who becomes tearful even from the shock of hearing verbal abuse. [A Persian proverb well describes] this situation as 'a female who is referred to as being veiled yet she is without an outer covering'! Such a situation has no relationship with high morals or with forbearance. This is the nature of the example of the character of the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup>. Had he attained a position of power and had he been granted the power to take revenge from his enemies and had then shown that he loved his enemies and forgave their faults, we would, of course, have had to acknowledge that he presented an example of high moral characteristics. However, to consider his deeds as being of a high moral standard when it is the case that he did not unfortunately have such an opportunity is blatantly shameful, because there were present circumstances to manifest] both aspects [of patient perseverance

as well as magnanimity]. There cannot be any proof of high moral characteristics. Consider now the comparison with our Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. The Makkans made him leave his native land and put him through extreme pain and suffering for thirteen years. His Companions too were made to suffer such extreme cruelties that would make one shiver just to read about them. All through this period of suffering, the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> showed extreme patience and perseverance. However, after migration he had the opportunity to achieve victory over Makkah. He would have been within his rights to avenge the Makkans for their persecution of himself and his Companions. [yet he displayed a character of the highest order]. He could have [if he so wished] finished them off and no opponent could have objected because the extent of persecution and the nature of their crimes warranted such punishment for the Meccans. Had the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> possessed the capacity of being wrathful, there was a strangely opportune moment as

the Makkans had all been captured. Instead, what did he do? He let them all go free and said ‘*La tathriba alaikum al-yaum*’, that is, ‘there shall be no reproof against you this day nor any punishment’. This is no small matter – keeping in view the extreme difficulties and tribulation of the earlier period in Makkah, how graciously is a deadly enemy forgiven! Such was the example of the high moral characteristics of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>, the like of which is not to be found anywhere in the world.

It needs to be remembered that it was not the case that the Makkans merely rejected the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. Simple rejection by itself does not lead to punishment from God in this world. [This occurs] when the rejection by a liar is accompanied by his objections exceeding the limits of decency and humanity, becoming shame-less insolent. Moreover, such opposition no longer remains within the limits of objection but becomes the source of schemes and plans for



causing all manner of pain and suffering [to the Messengers and their followers] and fulfilling such plans to the utmost limit. It is then that God's sense of honour is stirred and He destroys such cruel people for the cause of His Messengers as He destroyed the people of Noah<sup>(as)</sup>, and the people of Lot<sup>(as)</sup>. Such punishment is invariably a result of the mischief and cruelty that is perpetrated against the Messengers and their community. Otherwise, mere rejection does not lead to punishment in this world – the case of such a one is with God and there exists another realm of God's punishment.

Punishment that is inflicted upon people is due to their extreme cruelty [towards God's Messengers and his followers] and for turning their rejection into ridicule, mockery and derision. Were they to state in a gentle and polite manner that they have not understood the matter and therefore are hesitant to accept the new message, such a rejection does not bring

punishment because it is due to simple mindedness and lack of knowledge. I say it truly that had the people of Noah<sup>(as)</sup> objected in an honourable manner, God would not have punished them. All nations face punishment as a result of their own conduct.

God has clearly stated that those who come to listen to the Holy Qur'an should be taken to a place of safety even if they should be the opponents or those who reject. This is so because there is no compulsion or force in Islam as is stated [in the Holy Qur'an].

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ

*There should be no compulsion in religion.*  
(Ch.2: V.257)

However, should someone make plans for or commit murder or strive to make mischief and perpetrate cruelty, it is certain that he would face punishment. It is a general rule that criminal acts should lead to punishment. The Makkans were guilty of criminal acts and mischief; it was,

therefore, legitimate that they should be punished and the holy ground [of the Ka'aba] and its surrounding areas should be cleansed. However, the one who was 'Mercy unto all the worlds' and he who was the living proof of [the following verse of the Holy Qur'an]:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَّ خُلِقَ عَظِيمٍ

*Thou dost surely possess high moral excellences*  
(Ch .68: V.5)

[that is, the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam], while in possession of full strength and authority, said to his enemies who were guilty of crimes punishable by death: '*La tathriba alaikum al-yaum*', that is, 'there shall be no reproof against you this day nor any punishment'.

The Christian priests should tell us where we are to find such a moral characteristic in the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup>? By what means can we bring such an example in the life of the Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> when according to their own beliefs he

was always being forced into situations of helplessness. He could not find a place of safety and security – (it is, however, against Ahmadiyya Muslims belief to even think that a Prophet of God can face such humiliating circumstances).

***To be continued***

In this journal, for the ease of non-Muslim readers, '(sa)' or 'sa' after the words, 'Holy Prophet', or the name 'Muhammad', are used. They stand for '*Salallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*' meaning 'Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him'. Likewise, the letters '(as)' or 'as' after the name of all other prophets is an abbreviation meaning 'Peace be upon him' derived from '*Alaihis salatu wassalam*' for the respect a Muslim reader utters.

The abbreviation 'ra' or (ra) stands for '*Radhiallahu ta'ala* and is used for Companions of a Prophet, meaning Allah be pleased with him or her (when followed by the relevant Arabic pronoun). Also 'ru' or (ru) for '*Rahemallahu Ta'ala* means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

# Jihad, Human Rights and the Treatment of Minorities in Islam

A Discussion Paper Prepared for a Seminar on Enlightened Moderation in OIC (Organisation for Islamic Cooperation) Countries – May 2004

by M. A. Ashraf

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The Muslim world faces unprecedented political threats and ideological challenges from within and without. Extremists have grabbed the international limelight through their repeated acts of barbarism in the name of Allah. They exploit the deeply felt religious beliefs and political grievances of the masses and have succeeded in setting the world agenda. They can perhaps claim ‘success’ in ridding the Muslim world of the recent formidable threats of the Soviets in Afghanistan, of the large-scale presence of Western troops in Saudi Arabia and of avenging many injustices committed by the West against Muslims by striking at the heart of the USA, on September 11, 2001. They have seized the initiative on behalf of Muslims on the world stage and they alone provide a

seemingly credible strategy for addressing the Muslim world's remaining problems – Palestine and the problems of non-democratic, ineffective and corrupt regimes.

What makes these extremists so potent a threat to Muslims and non-Muslims alike is not their creative and insatiable capacity for acts of terror but their intoxicating and corrosive ideology. At the same time, the West is subjecting Muslims to an onslaught of criticisms of their faith, their politics and their culture. These criticisms centre on the concepts of jihad, human rights and treatment of minorities but they also, by implication, touch on Islamic practice on freedom of conscience, on the use of rationality in theology and on the acquisition and creation of

knowledge. The average moderate Muslim stands largely defenceless against such attacks and is unable to limit or influence the West's perceived 'aggressive political ambitions' in the region. One of the great tragedies of the situation is that the enlightened moderates have no single voice whereas the extremists have become increasingly united in their chorus of hatred against the West and those they regard as corrupt Muslim elites.

Moderate Muslims and radical extremists are locked in their own conflict to represent Islam, both declaring the other as non-Muslim. This causes confusion. There is confusion over what is Islam (a Muslim's identity), who represents it (political and religious authority) and, in particular, what Islam really says about jihad, about human rights and about the treatment of minorities. What then are the causes of this confusion? And how can confusion and misinterpretation be addressed?

### **The Causes of Misinterpretation: The Muslim Causes**

Of all religions, it is generally acknowledged that Islam provides the most comprehensive code of life. It claims to provide the answer to man's every need. Many Muslims throughout history have interpreted this claim in the literal sense. They have looked for answers to political and social problems in the words of sacred texts and have avoided contextualising and interpreting the principles of Islam to contemporary life. The presence of a fundamentalist streak from earliest times is a consequence of such a tendency. Less well recognised is the effect this tendency has had on the failure to consistently develop robust institutions in Islamic societies.

Government and administrative systems for the very first Muslims were largely acquired from the Persians and Roman empires, which provided the initial conquests of land and peoples. Subsequently, trans-

lations of Persian manuals of statecraft and court etiquette and of Greek works on political philosophy provided more sophisticated ideas on which to base Islamic society.<sup>1</sup> Public institutions built on these ideas flourished largely on the whims of political leaders. Often these institutions collapsed and threatened individual and collective progress - a factor that can be traced as far back as the crusades. Amin Maalouf, in his book *The Crusades through Arab Eyes* claims that the absence of stability in institutions threatened civil rights. He illustrates the point by a testimony of Ibn Jubayr. Following his journey in the Middle East, he observed the stronger legal position of Muslims living under the Franj rule 'now, doubt invests the heart of a great number of these men when they compare their lot to that of their brothers living in Muslim territory. Indeed, the latter suffer from the injustice of their coreligionists, whereas the Franj act with equity.' 'In the Arab East, the judicial procedures were more rational,

but the arbitrary power of the Prince was unbounded. The development of merchant towns, like the evolution of ideas, could only be retarded as a result.'<sup>2</sup>

Enlightened Muslim scholars, however, believe that the Qur'an prescribes only an overarching constitution for life and limits detail to that which is essential. Otherwise the framework for life would become rigid, regressive and burdensome.

*O ye who believe! ask not about things which, if revealed to you, would cause you trouble; though if you ask about them while the Qur'an is being sent down they will be revealed to you. Allah has left them out out of kindness. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Forbearing. A people before you asked about such things, but then they became disbelievers therein.*

(Chapter 5: Verses 102-3).

That which has been 'left out' of the Revelation or *Hadith* has to be determined through a process

of rationality, knowledge, wisdom and, whenever possible, by mutual consultation (Chapter 42:Verse 39). That process must always aim at equity (ma'roof) and avoid iniquity (munkar). A simple illustration of this is contained in a *Hadith* from Tirmadhi. The Prophet of Islam<sup>(sa)</sup> asked his newly appointed Qadhi of Yemen what rules he would follow when he had to make a decision. The Qadhi replied that he would look for the rule in the Book of Allah. 'And if you do not find the answer in the Book?,' queried the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. 'I shall seek for it in the example of the Prophet.' 'And if you still lack an answer?' 'I shall exercise my own judgement.' 'That is the right way,' answered the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>.

Unsurprisingly, these enlightened teachings led to the development of the most comprehensive and diverse intellectual exercise in religious jurisprudence known to man. The effect of this development of a Science of Law was not restricted to Islam but, as the

eminent international jurist C. Wilfred Jenkins puts it, Islam developed the Common Law of Mankind. There were, however, two important side effects that shaped subsequent Islamic values and society. Firstly, Islamic jurists progressively went beyond providing guidance for practical and immediate problems facing society to self-serving academic and intellectual exercises. They dwelt on theoretical and hypothetical questions and thus served to constrain decision-making for future generations. Scholars of subsequent generations became increasingly limited in how they could exercise their intellectual talents. Some were tempted to theorising on absurd and hyperbolic interpretations of faith and Law. Secondly, this emphasis on jurisprudence progressively occurred in isolation of the acquisition of knowledge and without the benefit of stable civic institutions.

'Throughout the crusades, the Arabs refused to open their own society to ideas from the

West. And this, in all likelihood, was the most disastrous effect of the aggression of which they were the victims.<sup>3</sup>

This tendency within Islamic countries to insulate themselves from external intellectual influence continues in present times. A United Nation's commissioned report, prepared by Arab intellectuals states that

‘The Arab world translates some 330 books annually, one-fifth of the number that Greece translates. The cumulative total of translated books since the Caliph Maa'moun's [*sic*] time [the ninth century] is about 100,000, almost the average that Spain translates in one-year.’<sup>4</sup>

Whatever the causes of this staggering lack of interest in knowledge, they are not to be found in the teachings of Islam. Even a cursory knowledge of Islamic history suggests that this neglect of learning is a relatively

new phenomenon. The religious teaching on learning is best summed up in an Essay by one of the few Muslim Nobel Laureates, Professor Abdus Salam.

‘According to Dr Mohammed Aijazul Khatib of Damascus University, nothing could emphasise the importance of sciences more than the remark that ‘in contrast to 250 verses which are legislative, some 750 verses of the Holy Qur’an – almost one-eighth of it – exhort the believers to study Nature – To reflect, to make the best use of reason and to make the scientific Enterprise an integral part of the community’s life.’ The Holy Prophet of Islam – peace be upon him – said that it was the ‘bounden duty of every Muslim – man and woman – to acquire knowledge.’<sup>5</sup>

Another reason why the Arabs were reluctant to learn from outsiders was that the Crusaders’ behaviour exposed their cultural, material and moral inferiority in

everything except courage and strength in battle. There was, and continues to be in Muslim societies, an element of cultural chauvinism. Usamah Ibn Munqidh wrote:

‘All those who were well informed about the Franj saw them as beasts superior in courage and fighting ardour but in nothing else, just as animals are superior in strength and aggression’.<sup>6</sup>

During, and for many centuries after the crusades, there existed a dynamic tension between those who believed in enlightened moderation and those who were inspired by fundamentalist and regressive doctrine. Political leadership rather than theological trends inspired the ebb and flow of the dynamic. An enlightened political leader often created a moderate and progressive society. Despots tended to undo progress. The underlying trend until recent times, however, was one of moderation in ideology, acceptance of people with other beliefs and absorption of new

ideas. Even as late as 1602, the Archbishop of Valencia, when providing Philip III with reasons for driving out the Muslims, acknowledged that:

‘They commended nothing so much as that liberty of conscience, in all matters of religion, which the Turks and all other Mohammadans suffer the subjects to enjoy’.<sup>7</sup>

Even when Islamic societies began to lose political power to the West, they tended to respect human rights, behaved well towards non-Muslim minorities and avoided rebellion and armed struggle to a large degree. Systematic dereliction of human rights in Muslim societies only became commonplace in the second half of the last century following independence in the non-traditional nationalist and communist regimes in Arab countries.

Historically, therefore, Islamic societies have had a tradition of tolerance and justice but they have been occasionally let down



by a failure to establish strong political institutions and absorb ideas from others. These weaknesses in state structures and a failure to properly acquire and exploit knowledge has led to a fracture of Muslim society between those who rule and those who wish to and between those who are moderate and enlightened and those who are not. In recent years political manipulation of extremists by governments in Muslim countries has led to an increasing abuse of personal freedoms by states and an increasing call for a jihad by extremists.

### **Freedom, Politics and Theology**

The Islamic world is dominated by two parallel but linked discourses. The first discourse encapsulates the tension between those who believe that the code of life for a Muslim is contained entirely within sacred texts and does not require rationality and knowledge to unlock and those who suggest that application of sharia is almost impossible without critical and rational

debate. The second discourse relates to the role of Islam in politics. There are those who believe that Islam can only be truly lived in an Islamic state and others who suggest that linking Islam with politics is the cause of its current crisis. The Tunisian scholar, Mohammad Talbi, links both discourses when he says: 'there is no meaning to faith if there is no freedom of choice. The renewal of Islam is more to do with questions of the social and political order than with questions of theology that remain entirely sound. Muslims have suffered because they have used Islam politically.'<sup>8</sup> Whether one agrees with Talbi's conclusions or not, his statement neatly links the discourses on theological interpretation and political involvement in Islam to personal freedoms.

These discourses are underpinned by a couple of themes. The first is of identity. Who is a Muslim and who is an unbeliever (kafir)? What is the relationship between a Muslim and a kafir? The second theme is related to

the first and deals with authority. Who has authority to provide political leadership and who has authority to interpret religion?

These themes have been played out in an ironic fashion during the last four decades. The Islamists have taken a narrow view of who constitutes a Muslim. Essentially, a Muslim is only he who conforms to the particular Islamists' ideology. Islamist political parties have repeatedly sought to excommunicate other sects particularly those that are ideologically opposed to them. Yohanan Friedman, in his book *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam* points to the persecution of the Bahais and the Ahmadis by Muslim governments as examples of intolerance and coercion by both Muslim societies and states. In these cases the extremists called for persecution and the state complied. The Bahais were forced to renounce Islam and President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan effectively excommunicated the Ahmadis in 1974 as a means of winning the support of

the *ulama* following economic and political difficulties.

This example of exploitation of Islamic extremists by secular Muslim leaders is part of a pattern, which has proved disastrous both for the leader and the country concerned. General Zia, strongly supported by Jama'at-i-Islami, subsequently executed Bhutto and a RAND report for the US government identified the action of Bhutto against the Ahmadis as the point at which religious extremism entered Pakistani politics.<sup>9</sup> General Zia was also assassinated by unknown assailants but not before his support for militant insurgency in the region had taken hold. Anwar Sadat repeated this pattern. He exploited the Muslim Brotherhood against political opponents but had to pay the ultimate price when the extremists assassinated him for making peace with Israel. In the meantime, his support of the militants strengthened their hand and increased their subsequent influence over Egyptian and regional politics. More recently,

Osama bin Ladin and his Al Qaeda organisation had the blessing of the Saudi and Gulf States regimes. These regimes are now being targeted by these very extremists as un-Islamic or kafir.

The definition of a Muslim or kafir is, therefore, central to the debate over jihad and the role of Islam in politics. Leaders of Muslim states, who would have identified themselves as moderate and enlightened, have behaved irresponsibly by conceding to the exclusive nature of the extremists' definition of a Muslim. In so doing they have given the extremists more credibility than they deserve and provided the extremists with a theological noose to put around the necks of the respective head of state and his government.

The increasingly narrow and fragmented definition of a Muslim has allowed the extremists to challenge political and theological authority. They have thus disassociated themselves from enlightened mod-

erate views. For them, authority to interpret Islam rests only with a true leader of the faithful (Amir ul-Momineen). As the majority of Muslims are not true Muslims by their definition, they do not qualify for the status of leader in either temporal or spiritual matters. The extremists have constructed leadership cults around charismatic individuals who espouse a simplified, confrontational ideology of Islam, promising salvation, paradise and political utopia. They have begun to cooperate on strategy and share ideology by setting up alliances between various groups throughout the Islamic world. The so-called enlightened moderates, on the other hand, lack unity, credibility and clearly identified leadership.

As Joseph Conrad put it, 'Every extremist is at least sincere'.<sup>10</sup> The religious credibility amongst its followers of Al Qaeda's doctrine is crucial to their worldview and motivation. Without it, Al Qaeda's influence would be greatly reduced. A potential target for moderate

Muslims could be to rob the extremists of their religious credibility by exposing the flaws in their arguments and by better addressing the social and economic causes that they champion. This would require unity of effort, which can only be achieved through unity of definition of a Muslim. Whilst it may not be possible to agree on a single religious authority, a truly united coalition of Islamic sects and schools of thought would have sufficient weight to provide a challenge against the extremists.

### **Western Causes**

The West has interacted with Islam throughout history as a political competitor and a theological rival. This has shaped the West's view of Islam in a more negative way than its view of other world civilisations such as the Chinese with whom the West had relatively little contact. The crusades were the first and most sustained political and theological conflict between the West and Islam. Despite the Arabs' relative cultural superi-

ority and their advances in science and learning, the image of the Muslim in the Western mind was largely a negative one due to the bloody conflict that raged over several hundred years. Later, the Enlightenment involved the West looking for its ideological roots in Greek philosophy, science and mythology. The ancient Greeks had been at war with the Persians and had developed the customary negative images of a rival for their eastern neighbours. For them all easterners were backward, uncivilised and untrustworthy. When Westerners came across the Greeks' negative stereotypes they adopted them as an impression of the Orient. This myth fed the stereotypical beliefs of Orientalists who subsequently studied Islam, despite the fact that the ancient Greeks and the Persians had preceded Islam by several hundred years. The Orientalists informed the worldview of the European colonial powers when they invaded Muslim countries. The Greeks' ancient prejudices of the East, therefore, provided an

ideological justification for Christian missionaries to regard Islam as a backward and uncivilised faith that, like the savages of Africa, needed to be subdued for its salvation. In recent times, the rise of Islamic extremism has rekindled these old prejudices.

USA's Attorney General, John Ashcroft, said: 'Islam is a religion in which God requires you to send your son to die for him. Christianity is a faith in which God sends his son to die for you.'<sup>11</sup> This pithy sound-bite was a deliberate counter-attack on Islam following the September 11 atrocity. Muslims would wish to unpick the many theological asymmetries and inaccuracies in Ashcroft's statement. But only two points need be made. For Muslims, Jesus was not the Son of God nor do most accept that he died on the cross. Christians and Muslims agree, however, that he was persecuted and was prepared to die for his beliefs and for the freedom of conscience of others. A willingness to offer sacrifice,

life if necessary, for freedom of conscience is a common value in both religions. It is this belief that underpins the concept of salvation and martyrdom in Christianity and the concept of jihad in Islam. Ashcroft's comments could, however, suggest that the misinterpretation of jihad and Muslims' behaviour towards their fellow human beings is the cause of the major conflicts in the world today.

The second point is that if Ashcroft is to be taken at face value, then Christians would be benign pacifists. We would not have had the slaughter of 20,000 British troops on the Somme or the burning of over 10,000 Germans, mostly civilians, in one night in Dresden. Certainly, they would not have done this while singing the Hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers!' Whilst religion had been separated from the machinery of government in the West, a faith was very much part of the soldiers' beliefs. Both Field Marshal Montgomery and General George S Patton wrote prayers for their troops.<sup>12</sup> The

fact is that Christians, Muslims, Jews and Hindus are human beings, all equally capable of choosing the higher ideals of their faith or committing selfish and barbaric acts. Those Christians who indulged in the wanton destruction of fellow human beings and in the annihilation of various tribes and peoples of the New World are as divorced from their religion as those Muslims who justify the slaughter of innocents in the name of Allah. This apparent inability of the West to acknowledge its own barbaric past whilst criticising Muslims, leads to claims of double standards and hypocrisy. But the reasons may be more deep-rooted.

There is a difference in the conception of history and spirituality between Islam and the West. In Islam, history, whilst being evolutionary, is a series of cycles in which human progress and decline is linked to spiritual enlightenment. For the West, history is a linear phenomenon in which material progress and

spirituality have no direct linkage. Progress depends upon the evolution of science, ideas and values. Therefore, any failings of Christians or liberal democracies half a century ago do not, in themselves, discredit these institutions as long as their values have evolved to higher ideals. Codes of conduct for Muslims were established over 1400 years ago and, by definition, are consistent and everlasting. For the West, what was once acceptable behaviour can now be deemed unacceptable on the basis of human progress. Consequently, when Westerners make comparisons between Islam and the West it is in on the basis of their contemporary standards. The Muslims on the other hand see themselves and the West in a broader historical and spiritual framework. This asymmetry in the conception of history and spirituality may never be resolved and there is no compelling reason why it should be – given that it reflects the difference in the identities of the two civilisations. However, recognising that this difference

exists and understanding the problems it may cause when discussing ideas are essential in maintaining a clear dialogue.

Another cause of misunderstanding is the relationship between religion and violence. According to popular Western culture religion, race and class are the causes of social violence. At the psychological level, however, a different picture emerges. It is a human trait to justify evil in the name of some greater good. Walter Reich, in his book *Origins of Terrorism*<sup>13</sup> explains the necessity of moral justification and of obscuring personal agency. He identifies the premise that human beings have a self-sanction mechanism that stops them from committing inhumane acts. Overcoming such scruples can be done by '...reconstructing conduct as serving moral purposes, by obscuring personal agency in detrimental activities, by disregarding or misrepresenting the injurious consequences of one's actions, or by blaming and dehumanising the victims.' What

this means in essence is that people need moral justification before they indulge in horrific actions. For this they look to the primary source of morality in their society. That is invariably religion. This is what causes confusion over whether it is religion, politics or human nature that is the true motivation behind savagery. With a few exceptions in scholarly circles (such as Mark Juergensmeyer), the West's largely secular society does not deem it necessary to investigate the role of religion in conflict. They have accepted the myth that Islam is a belligerent religion whilst Christianity, and more specifically, Western liberal democracies, are benign.

Misinterpretation of Islam, therefore, has been caused by factors within Islamic societies as well as by the West's own historical experience. The emerging weaknesses in Islamic jurisprudence, the failure to acquire knowledge and build stable social institutions has led not just to the neglect of human rights but also to a mis-

understanding of the true meaning of jihad and in the discharge of obligations towards minorities. It is in these three areas that the enlightened and moderate Muslim has to look for solutions to the problems facing their societies. The challenge for Muslims is, therefore, to determine just how revelation, rationality and knowledge are linked in extracting the truth of Islam. Also, it is to determine the role Islam should play in politics and, in particular, the rights of an individual in an Islamic society. Is the debate merely one of binary opposite choices i.e. between an Islamic state and a secular society? Or does Islam allow a more flexible influence on politics? The answers to these questions will provide the philosophical context in which the detailed questions regarding the role of jihad, human rights and the status of minorities within Islam can be clarified. Until that happens across the Ummah as a whole, the Muslim world will itself be confused about, and is likely to misinterpret, its religion. The

enemies of enlightened and moderate Muslims will always exploit this confusion.

### **The Meaning of Jihad**

Islam originated in an Arab society that was largely illiterate, fragmented by tribal division and given to barbaric acts. Its initial response to the message of Islam was one of violent opposition. Within a generation, however, that Arab society not only succumbed to Islam but also subdued much of the neighbouring territory. The uni-fying and civilising influence of Islam on an unlikely people was as amazing as the speed with which it spread to other more distant peoples. In about a century, Islam became politically and culturally pre-eminent in the world.

Jihad, in the form of an armed struggle, was a significant feature in early Islamic history. Many Western and some Muslim scholars have attributed the remarkable success of early Islam to jihad. Of the Muslims holding this view, many believe that within jihad lies the answer



to the plight of Muslims today. What does jihad really mean? Was jihad purely defensive or was it the cause of Islam's political success and does it provide an answer to its current problems?

### **The Evolution of Jihad Concepts**

According to Youssef Choueiri, 'The first Islamic state in history, and irrespective of its rudimentary organisation, came into being through a process of peaceful means.'<sup>14</sup> The initial battles were purely defensive with the Muslims heavily outnumbered. The number of fatalities during the eight-year period between the battle of Badr and the campaign of Tabuk on both sides was relatively small at about 1250, of which 250 are estimated as Muslim deaths<sup>15</sup>. As such the role of the lesser jihad (*Jihad-e-asghar*, jihad of the sword) in Islamic history is relatively small but its impact has been greatly exaggerated and misunderstood by both Muslims and non-Muslim alike. This type of jihad presupposes certain

conditions and imposes upon the practitioner specific limits. The Qur'an spells these out as follows:

*Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged – and Allah indeed has power to help them – Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Lord is Allah' – And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him.*

(Chapter 22:Verses 40-42)

This verse sets out, amongst other things, that jihad is authorised to preserve freedom of worship and conscience. It is the conscience and freedoms of all people, be they Jews, Christians, Muslims or of other faiths. Allah, in this sense, is the

same God who is worshipped in cloisters, churches, synagogues and mosques. By confirming the unity of all religions and peoples under one God, the verse says almost as much about the imperative of peaceful co-existence and mutual respect between nations as it does about jihad. War is also permitted in Islam for self-defence and to exact just retribution but these two types of war do not qualify as jihad according to the above verse of the Qur'an.

Nevertheless, the word jihad may be used, in its literal sense of 'struggle,' to describe just such political wars. It is likely that orientalist and Muslim militants misinterpreted many of the fatwas issued by medieval scholars and a mistaken interpretation of jihad has entered Islamic jurisprudence.

All types of war are, however, limited by the Rules of Engagement specified elsewhere in the Qur'an and the hadith. Another significant feature of the above verse is that God promises

to use His power to help those forced to undertake this form of jihad. In early Islamic history this promise was always fulfilled despite overwhelming odds faced by the Muslims. Decisive and often dramatic victory is, therefore, a test of the Divine validity of any declared jihad.

Maududi initiated the contemporary jihadi doctrine. His writings influenced Qutb and the many subsequent jihadi movements including Al Qaeda. At the same time, the political abuses of the monarchy in Iran led to the prominence of the Shia leader Khomeini. It is not clear if Maududi or Qutb directly influenced Khomeini but he certainly shares some basic beliefs with them. For Maududi, Qutb and Khomeini, conflict was not necessary to preserve the freedom of conscience and worship; rather it was necessary for the freedom to govern. They were revolting against the status quo. Maududi saw his situation as being similar to the French, Russian and Nazi revolutions. He saw his theoretical framework as

being analogous to the one Fichte, Goethe and Nietzsche provided for the Nazis. This theoretical framework had to be coupled with ‘the ingenious and mighty leadership of Hitler and his comrades’<sup>16</sup> for success to be achieved.

The Jihadists have embodied this idea of ‘ingenious and mighty leadership and comrades’ in their leadership and in the concept of a jihadi vanguard – ‘an organised and active group’ which has cut off its relationship with the *jahili* society.<sup>17</sup> Since the mid-nineties, the debate on jihad has been dominated by Al Qaeda’s thinking. Osama bin Ladin exploited the apparent success of the jihad in Afghanistan to call for a jihad against the West. Initially the objective was to repel the American forces from Saudi Arabia. Very soon the objective became a direct attack on the West, particularly the USA, in order to weaken the West’s support for Muslim governments so that they could be overtaken by Islamist regimes. Although the focus of

Al Qaeda inspired terrorist activity has shifted largely to Europe and the USA, attacks within Muslim countries have not ceased but escalated. What Samuel Huntington described as ‘Islam’s bloody borders’ in 1993<sup>18</sup> had turned in to Islam’s ‘bloody innards’ by 1996.<sup>19</sup>

There is thus a jihad simultaneously against the West and against the majority of the Muslim world being fought by Islamists using the tools of terror. Islamists themselves have identified the dangers of this situation. The Sudanese General Omar Hassan al-Bashir, lamented the failure of the Islamists to capitalise on their success and unity in Afghanistan. He deplored their infighting and rejection of modern political and democratic procedures: ‘If the Islamists do not succeed in resolving this problem, they will deal a mortal blow to hopes of Islamic renewal, and bring down calamity upon Islam. And that calamity will be worse than any visited upon it by communism or secularism – for Islamists can

strike Islam in its most vital places, where its enemies have never yet managed to inflict a wound.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Extremists' Interpretation**

Subtle differences in the interpretation of religious teachings can lead to fundamental divergence of belief and practice. In his book, *Fundamentals of Islam*, Maududi describes the purpose and practice of Islamic worship (*salah*, fasting and zakat) and then claims their primary purpose is for jihad. To the extent that worship is the primary means of achieving the goal of the greater jihad, the submission of one's ego to God, he is right. But he soon makes the point that: 'the root of all the evils you find in the world lies in the bad character of the government.'<sup>21</sup> He goes on to say that *Deen* (faith) actually means government. He identifies many different types of government or *Deen* and suggests that: 'whatever *Deen* it may be, it unfailingly wants acquisition of power.'<sup>22</sup> The conclusion of his

argument is:

'you cannot follow this *Deen* [Islam] after being subservient to any other *Deen*. You cannot also follow it even in partnership with any other system of life. Thus, if you really consider this *Deen* is true, then you have no other alternative but to exert yourself with your uttermost power to establish this *Deen*. Either you leave no stone unturned in establishing it or give your life in this effort. This is the touchstone on which can be tested your faith and the truthfulness of your belief.'<sup>23</sup>

Bin Ladin, the contemporary spokesman for jihadist beliefs, employs powerful rhetoric to articulate the political and social injustices committed against Muslims by Western powers. He combines this with *fatwas* to declare rebellion against the status quo a religious obligation. This complex mixing of generally acknowledged disadvantages in Muslim politics and society with

plausible sounding theological arguments are amongst the most powerful factors behind Al Qaeda's success.

Bin Ladin and his deputy, Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri, draw on the ideology of the late Abdullah Azzam, bin Ladin's intellectual mentor. Their concept of jihad is heavily influenced by the writings of Sayyid Qutb, who has admitted to being influenced by Abul Al'a Maududi. All of these writers are essentially political commentators who have selectively drawn on Islamic teachings and precedence to justify their doctrine. They all fall neatly into the definition and description of Islamists given by Guilain Denoeux:

'Islamists are engaged in a process of intellectual, political and social engineering which, through the familiar language of Islam, aims to legitimise a thorough restructuring of society and polity along lines that have no precedent in history. Under the pretence of re-

establishing an old order, what is intended is the making of a new one.'<sup>24</sup>

For example, extremists often quote Qur'anic phrases such as '*kill wherever you find them*' as justification for assassination and murder. Most enlightened scholars will testify that this verse only applies in cases where the enemy has first attacked Muslims and applies to those unbelievers and enemies who break their oaths and agreements. It does not apply to unprovoked conflict. Similarly, historical precedence going back, in cases, to Ibn Tamiyya is also sometimes quoted out of context.

The trademark rationale for these religious leaders is thus to subtly mix political imperatives with theological argument. For Islamists like Khomeini, the idea of a 'return to Islam' is linked to the goal of overcoming foreign domination. The underlying logic of the Islamist argument is familiar: The believers are suffering because they have deviated from the laws of God.

To end their suffering, they have to conform to God's laws. God has allowed the infidels to dominate the believers because they have deviated from His laws.<sup>25</sup> The challenge for the Muslims is to determine who truly articulates God's law.

### **The Rules of Engagement in Jihad**

The principle of distinction and the underlying principle of proportionality are fundamental aspects of humanitarian law and were fully embodied in Islamic teachings. For example, the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> amplified Qur'anic teachings by saying:

'You will meet those who remember Almighty Allah in their houses of worship. Have no dispute with them, and give no trouble to them. In the enemy country, do not kill any women or children, or the blind, or the old. Do not pull down any tree; nor pull down any building.'

(Quoted from *Halbiyyah*, Vol.3).

Al Qaeda has recently indulged in semantic acrobatics to justify the killing of innocents in its many atrocities. It has suggested that as all citizens in democracies choose their governments and as these governments rule in the name of the people, all citizens are by implication legitimate combatant target. However, Islamic scripture leaves little room for doubt that there can never be any such justification. Even the ideological father of Islamic extremists, Maududi, has provided a clear ruling forbidding the killing of innocents.

'The Tradition of the Prophet reads: "The greatest sins are to associate something with God and to kill human beings." In all these verses of the Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet the word 'soul' (nafs) has been used in general terms without any distinction or particularisation which might have lent itself to the elucidation that the persons belonging to one's nation, the citizens of one's country, the people of a particular race or

religion should not be killed. The injunction applies to all human beings and the destruction of human life in itself has been prohibited.<sup>26</sup>

According to other hadith, diplomatic immunity has to be respected and any mistakes or discourtesy committed by diplomats are required to be ignored. Immunity is also granted to priests, religious functionaries and religious leaders.

### **Proportionality**

Proportionality, mitigation and avoidance of unnecessary suffering are primary features of Islamic teachings on warfare. According to Abu Dawud, the least possible losses should be inflicted upon the enemy and opportunities for a peaceful settlement must always be kept open. Muslims are forbidden from cheating the enemy and from damaging public buildings and crops. They are to avoid striking terror into the general population. Their campsites should be in places that avoid inconvenience to the public and the movement of

forces should not block roads or cause discomfort to other travellers.

Suicide bombings are a terrorist tactic originally developed by the Tamil Tigers. It is now the adopted trademark of those who claim jihad in the name of Allah. Suicide bombings are contrary to the teachings of Islam. Allah says: *And kill not your own selves. Surely, Allah is Merciful to you.* (Chapter 4: Verse 30) ...and cast *not yourselves into ruin with your own hands...* (Chapter 2:Verse 196)

### **Treatment of Prisoners**

Prisoners can only be taken in the event of a regular declared war. The Holy Qur'an specifically states:

*It does not behove a Prophet that he should have captives until he engages in regular fighting in the land. You desire the goods of the world, while Allah desires for you the Hereafter. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.*  
(Chapter 8:Verse 68)

This verse discredits the practice of slavery, restricts imprisonment to war and demolishes any justification of hostage-taking and hijacking of people not involved in actual combat.

In his farewell address the Holy Prophet of Islam<sup>(sa)</sup> gave special instructions regarding the treatment of prisoners. The Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> said:

‘O men, you still have in your possession some prisoners of war. I advise you, therefore, to feed them and to clothe them in the same way and style as you feed and clothe yourselves... To give them pain or trouble can never be tolerated.’

In a hadith according to Abu Dawud, closely related prisoners are to be co-located. As such, not only is torture or degrading treatment forbidden but also the status of prisoners is raised well above the stipulations of the Geneva Convention. Yet many extremists (and sometimes Muslim governments also)

indulge in kidnapping, torture, humiliation and the killing of captives. If that is not enough, they parade mutilated bodies through the streets. They are not only contravening the common laws of decency but also their Prophet: ‘The Prophet has prohibited us from mutilating the corpses of the enemies’ (al-Bukhari). These extremists rightly invite the description of barbaric by the West – a description that rapidly attaches to all Muslims.

With such clear Islamic teachings on the restrictions of making and conducting war, ignorance of theology cannot be an excuse for Islamic extremists. The question then arises as to why the extremists feel the need to contravene or adapt Islamic sharia. The answer lies not in religion but in the secular philosophy of war. Carl Von Clausewitz, a Prussian soldier and one of the world's most influential military theorist (1780-1831) defined war as ‘an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our



will'<sup>27</sup> Clausewitz advocated that force had to be used without restraint in order to guarantee victory: 'to introduce into the philosophy of war itself a principle of moderation would be an absurdity.'<sup>28</sup> This philosophy influenced the Western concept of Total War during the early 20th century in which the citizens of a state and the means of production within it were considered equally valid targets as its armies. When theoretical and empirical evidence points to the necessity of unrestrained violence as a guarantee of success in conflict, it is difficult for those intoxicated with the prospect of victory to be restrained by the shackles of religious moderation. Al Qaeda, for example, is well aware of Western philosophy of war and military doctrine. Its leaders have quoted from United States military manuals and proudly claimed that they understand modern warfare better than the West. As Thomas J. Butko says: 'those movements that utilise the ideology of political Islam are not primarily religious groups concerned with issues of doctrine

and faith, but political organisations utilising Islam as a 'revolutionary' ideology to attack, criticise, and de-legitimise the ruling elites and the power structure on which their authority and legitimacy is based.'<sup>29</sup>

Examining the restraint with which force is applied provides one of the clearest methods of discriminating between organisations that are primarily motivated by political objectives and those motivated by religious ones. Islamic history provides many examples of political and military restraint in jihad by the original Muslims. The current jihadis, on the other hand, are continually expanding the envelope 'of acceptable' violence to achieve their political goals.

### **Islam and Human Rights What are they?**

Human rights are based on a number fundamental principles or rights. Firstly, all individuals have certain basic rights such as the right of free speech, the right of association and the right to a fair trial. Secondly, citizens are

protected against the abuse of power. Thirdly, individuals are given greater participation in public decision-making. And finally, the state and authority in general is made accountable.

For a society to enjoy healthy respect for human rights requires both robust public institutions and private ethical standards. Institutions must safeguard human rights through executive, administrative, legislative and judicial processes. At the same time, society at both the individual and collective level needs to have a moral and spiritual commitment towards the rights of others. Human rights cannot, therefore, be seen in isolation of the nation's political and moral values. The situation in the Muslim world in this regard is dire. The lack of economic opportunity, social justice, free political expression and constant humiliation on the international stage has caused much resentment within Muslim societies. The *Arab Human Development Report 2002*<sup>30</sup>, compiled by Arab scholars,

highlights the 'freedom deficit' in the Arab world. This, it suggests, is what 'undermines human development and is one of the most painful manifestations of lagging political development'.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Perception of Western Roots and Aims**

Islamists suggest that whilst the concept of human rights evolved during the European Enlightenment, it was essentially for the European or white man. Western colonialism was an example of how selective these rights were. The Declaration is a recent event and universal application has not fully occurred. The West is alleged to operate double standards through a variety of means. Firstly, postcolonial states are still led, in the main, by client governments who abuse human rights and are supported in so doing by the West. Secondly, the West is able to exert political pressure through the United Nations or the IMF and is so able to indirectly cause suffering to many innocent people. Thirdly, the West

dominates the media and in so doing is able to inflict its own cultural identity on the Muslim world. Whilst these arguments may be useful in putting the West's criticisms of Muslims into perspective, are they sufficient excuses for systemic failure of Muslim governments to scrupulously enforce rights?

Another challenge for Muslims is that the human rights debate and legislation is Western led and some details may clash with Islamic teachings. These clashes could include the role of women in Islam, and Islamic rules on punishments. Western secular human rights activists, who advocate that Islamic teachings need to be reinterpreted in the light of the Universal Declaration generally, lead these clashes. To them, the Declaration is binding. To the Muslims, their Scripture is pre-eminent. There seems little scope for compromise. A theory put forward by some Islamists is that these conflicts between Islamic law and the Universal Declaration are deliberately designed to weaken Islamic

teachings as it is these teachings that are considered to inspire the opposition to Israel.<sup>32</sup> Muslims will wish to challenge or shape certain details of the human rights code. They will be better placed to do so from a position of strength by demonstrably conforming to all other aspects of the Declaration.

The right to free speech is another area where the practice and interpretation of many Muslims comes into conflict with the West. The Salman Rushdie affair is a prime example. Whilst Muslims may have been justified in feeling deeply offended by Rushdie's book, was the death *fatwah* according to sharia? Arshad Ahmadi, in his book *Rushdie: Haunted by His Unholy Ghost*, suggests that the offence in the book and resultant controversy were deliberately contrived as an attack on Islam. This attack was inspired by historical hatred and motivated by international politics. He suggests that it was a trap set for the majority of Muslims who had allowed themselves to believe

that apostasy is punishable by death. Ahmedi finds no support for such a punishment in Islamic teachings. Many Muslim leaders who supported or were silent on the *fatwah* against Rushdie faced accusations of being a kafir and there were calls for their death by Islamic extremists.

### **The Charge Against Islam**

Two things weaken the Muslims' defence against outside attacks on Islam and human rights. First is the incorrect interpretation of sharia. Does Islam really prescribe the death penalty for blasphemy or adultery? Does Islam truly give equal rights to women? There is certainly divergence of opinion on these issues. However, it is the interpretation of those who would answer 'yes' to the first question and no to the second that attracts the limelight. It is up to enlightened moderates to reverse the message. Secondly, the Western world judges people by action rather than belief. Those regimes that claim to have governed by sharia – Iran, the Sudan and the Taleban – have a

poor record on human rights. The sight of Taleban beating women wearing burkas with sticks, hardly paints a good picture of an Islamic government.

At the same time, the Islamists join the West in claiming that the Muslim world is one of the few remaining regions in the world where local culture is being systematically eroded through the persistent violation of human rights.

‘Mosques have been placed under direct government control, freedom of the press is non-existent, opponents are silenced or liquidated, women are punished for choosing to be modest, men are persecuted for choosing to follow the sunnah (way of the Prophet), and prisons host more prisoners of conscience than criminals.’<sup>33</sup>

### **Islamic Theology and Human Rights.**

Islamists such as Maududi argue that Islam not only complies with

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but also goes beyond that by making it an obligation on Muslims to provide such rights and enforce them. Maududi addresses the various Articles of the Declaration and provides pertinent scriptural references to prove that Islam recognised these freedoms and enforced them over 1400 years ago. His conclusion seems to be that Islamic teachings are far superior to the Declaration and, indeed, the declaration was inspired by these Islamic teachings.<sup>34</sup>

Earlier in 1967, Mohammad Zafrulla Khan, a religious scholar and past president of the International Court of Justice wrote a more extensive comparison of Islam and human rights. He had already provided scriptural references to show that Islam more than complied with the various Articles of the Declaration and provided a context to show that the teachings of Islam are those of freedom, truth and justice. A comparison between the

approach taken by Maududi and Khan demonstrates the subtlety sometimes needed to discriminate between uncompromising fundamentalism and enlightened moderation. Both scholars agree on the truth of Islam and the need to base argument strictly on Scripture. Both in their own distinctive styles are persuasive. However, Khan's extensive education allows him to make a more robust and comprehensive case for Islam and his moderate approach welcomes the West's initiative in making the Declaration. He does so not in a spirit of compromise but because, according to his argument, all religions derive from the same Divine source and so their basic moral principles are universal. It is this common ground that he and other moderates see as the basis for peaceful coexistence and cooperation. Maududi, however, cannot see the need for a Universal declaration and cannot see Muslims applying these rights without an Islamic government.

For Islamists righteousness, brotherly love and human dignity can only come from their version of Islam. This exclusive privilege can only be granted to a Muslim nation if it has an Islamist government (Dar-ul-Islam) and can only be offered to the rest of the world (Dar-ul-Hurb) through jihad. The link between this concept of exclusivity and the most current manifestation of Islamic extremism is well made by Giandomenico Picco:

‘Perhaps few groups today have constructed an entire *raison d’être* on a profound and deep sense of exclusion both at the practical and philosophical level like Al Qaeda. Exclusion contains by itself the very opposite of human rights. Unlike groups which have chosen over time to use terrorism as a tactic, those that have chosen terrorism as a strategy have to be sure to be rooted on an insurmountable sense of exclusion, on an unbridgeable gap with the “other” and on a dogmatic perception of being

in the sole possession of the truth and that those who do not agree need to be restrained or worse.’

The challenge for enlightened moderates is to replace this concept of exclusivity with a belief in cooperation and mutual respect. Before Muslim countries can adopt this spirit of peaceful cooperation with non-Muslims they must ensure that their own populations can peacefully coexist with a divergence of opinion amongst themselves.

### **The Reality of Human Rights in Muslim Countries**

Virtually all schools of Islamic thought support human rights because the concept of human dignity is central to Islamic belief and consequently its teachings are in accord with the basic principles of the Rights. However, most Muslim states have indulged in human rights abuses against their own population. Initially it was to impose Western modernisation by suppressing traditional radicalism.

‘Ataturk’s Turkey, Pahlavi’s Iran and Bourguiba’s Tunisia would be excellent examples to show how the post-independence territorial state has sought to obliterate Muslim identity, not through a simple process of secularisation that separated church from state, but through a systematic process of Westernisation.’<sup>35</sup>

Subsequently, the communist and nationalist governments of the postcolonial era used torture and other abuses to suppress opposition. More recently, such abuses are being conducted under the auspices of the War on Terror. There are reports that Western governments are sending prisoners to Muslim countries so that torture can be used to extract information without fear of Western governments being accused of violating human rights.<sup>36</sup> By indulging in abuses of individual rights and torture, Muslim regimes are violating the principles of Islam. Instead, their legitimisation is based on the Western ethical concept of ‘lesser

evil’ by asserting that these repressive means are justified to save lives of innocent people.

Furthermore, they fail to recognise that imprisonment and torture rarely achieve success against an ideologically motivated enemy but often lead to new recruits for extremists. During the Korean War, a significant percentage of US troops broke down under torture but only a tiny proportion of Turkish soldiers capitulated. The difference in behaviour was put down to a difference in ethos between the soldiers of the two nations. On the other hand, an Algerian terrorist recently provided this valuable insight into the link between torture, ideology and terrorism:

‘It takes more than the speeches of bin Laden to turn an Islamist into a terrorist. It takes years of feeling abused. To make me kill, my torture needs to be personal. To send me into a fury, I need flashbacks of suffering, not empty ideological concepts.

The Algerian government's tyranny has made the struggle feel real enough. Terrorist volunteers came running because of the blood that they tasted on their punched lips.<sup>37</sup>

### **Obligation Towards Minorities**

The Qur'an insists on the highest standards between peoples whether they are in a minority or a majority. It forbids one people from making fun, defaming, insulting, name-calling, back-biting or speaking ill of other peoples. (Chapter 49:Verses 12-13). These noble objectives can only be achieved through love according to the Holy Prophet of Islam<sup>(sa)</sup>: 'By Him in Whose Hands is my life, you will not enter Paradise unless you believe, and you will not truly believe unless you love one another. Shall I tell you something whereby you will love one another? Multiply the greeting of peace among yourselves.'

Muslims have been made to promise that they will help defend the followers of other

faiths from unjust and cruel attacks. In his charter for all time to come addressed to all Christians living as citizens under Muslim rule, the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> declares:

'I promise that any monk or wayfarer who will seek my help on the mountains, in forests, deserts or habitations, or in places of worship, I will repel his enemies with my friends and helpers, with all my relatives and with all those who profess to follow me and will defend them, because they are my covenant. And I will defend the covenanted against the persecution, injury and embarrassment of their ene-mies in lieu of the poll tax they have promised to pay. If they prefer to defend their properties and persons themselves, they will be allowed to do so and will not be put to any inconvenience on that account.

No bishop will be expelled from his bishopric, no monk from his monastery, no priest



from his place of worship, and no pilgrim will be detained in his pilgrimage. None of their churches and other places of worship will be desolated or destroyed or demolished. No material of their churches will be used to build mosques or houses for the Muslims; any Muslim doing so will be regarded as recalcitrant to Allah and His Prophet. Monks and Bishops will be subject to no tax or indemnity whether they live in forests or on rivers, in the East or in the West, in the North or in the South. I give them my word of honour. They are on my promise and covenant and will enjoy perfect immunity from all sorts of inconveniences. Every help shall be given them in the repair of their churches. They shall be absolved of wearing arms. They shall be protected by the Muslims. Let this document not be disobeyed till Judgment Day.’

*(Quoted from Balâdhar)*

Little need be said to amplify these clear obligations on Muslims. Sadly, there are Muslim countries today in which non-Muslims are not allowed to practise their faith, in others they are persecuted, in some their houses or places of worship are destroyed. In other countries they are openly killed. This behaviour rarely occurs in non-Muslim countries. The question of which nations obey and which nations disobey the teachings of Islam is well worth pondering. The answer is disturbing for those who claim enlightened moderation in Islam.

### **Challenges for Enlightened Moderates**

The struggle between enlightened moderation and regressive confrontation is a feature of all human society. It has existed in Islam from its conception. Early Islamic history provides many examples of enlightened moderation both in thought and action. In recent times enlightened and moderate Muslims appeared to turn to Western education and attitudes to help

interpret their religion. That method has been discredited. The contemporary attempt seems to centre on passionate pleas by Muslim intellectuals and leaders highlighting the civilising and tolerant nature of Islam. These pleas have gone largely unheard by both Muslims and Westerners. The bombs and bullets of the radical Islamists have drowned out the message of the enlightened moderates. It is their ideology of exclusivity, hate, confrontation and indiscriminate bloodshed that is increasingly inspiring Muslims and is increasingly seen by the West as Islam's shop window. The Muslim world is in a desperate situation. It faces a grave political and ideological challenge. What then is to be done?

Desperate times call for desperate measures. Radical, militant Islam can only be countered by a radical response from those who claim enlightened moderation. They will have to accept that their current interpretation of Islam contains barriers to successfully

discrediting the extremists' ideology. The first challenge is to address the definition of a Muslim. Is a definition possible? Without this question answered the dire need for dialogue and unity between Muslims cannot be addressed. No individual has a monopoly on truth. All Muslims can test the truth of their philosophy through debate. As for a political model in Islam, even a cursory study of Scripture reveals that Islam has never dictated any particular form of government. It favours consultation in public affairs and it provides an overarching framework of values, principles and obligations. How these are enacted is a matter for each people to decide. Another challenge is to revisit the teachings on religious tolerance in Islam: *There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong ...* (Holy Qur'an Chapter 2:Verse.257). How does this verse square with the popular belief on the punishment of apostasy in Islam? Moderate and enlightened Muslims cannot

claim to be so if they put to death anybody who challenges their version of Islam or relinquishes it altogether. Is there any reason why the various sects and Schools of Thought within Islam cannot engage in constructive dialogue? Should institutions be set-up for doing this? These steps should open doors to other enlightened interpretations. Prime amongst these will be an authentic and moderate interpretation of jihad, from that will follow an appropriately flexible understanding of the relationship between state and religion and from that will emerge the true Islamic teachings and practice on human rights, particularly those pertaining to non-Muslim minorities.

If those who wish to be enlightened and moderate are unable to unite, reform and defend Islam then they should know that the radical extremists are already attempting to do so.

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# Outstanding Female Muslims of the Holy Prophet's<sup>(sa)</sup> Era

Based on a speech by Quratul-ain Mirza at the occasion of Jalsa Salana, Canada, 2004.

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*And We have sent thee not but as a mercy for all peoples.*  
(Ch.21:V.108)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> was sent as a mercy for all creation. He treated everybody with kindness and affection. No one was deprived of his universal love and compassion and women had a fair share of his mercy and affection. He did not distinguish between men and women and treated them both with equity in matters of life. He taught both men and women wisdom and matters of religion by his own example and his influence on the lives of the first women converts to Islam was profound. Their courageous acts of bravery, unmatched sacrifices and absolute obedience are a testament to their absolute belief in the message of Islam.

## **Safiyah bint Abd al-Muttalib**

After the foundation of Islam, Hadhrat Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> and his followers suffered extremely harsh treatment from the enemies of Islam who wanted to ensure the complete eradication of Islam and its Prophet from the world. But their efforts were useless. Islam's living God is its Protector and He will never let the enemies win. After 13 years of the most severe treatment of the believers, Allah gave Muslims the permission to defend themselves with the sword. Many battles were fought. Many men and women were martyred on and off the battlefield. One of these was Hadhrat Safiyah bint Abd al-Muttalib<sup>(ra)</sup>, who was an aunt of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. During the Battle of the Trenches, she was with all the women in a fort away from the battlefield. She noticed a Jewish spy in the Muslim

ranks, trying to find information. She asked Hadhrat Hassan(ra) to kill the spy. Hadhrat Hassan(ra) had been left behind to guard the women. But Hadhrat Hassan(ra) did not take action. So Hadhrat Safiyah herself killed the spy. She then asked Hadhrat Hassan(ra) to sever the spy's head and throw it over the fort as a warning to others. However again Hadhrat Safiyah(ra) had to perform this gruesome task herself. The effect was that the enemy was deceived into thinking that an army was in wait and did not have the courage to attack. Her bravery and wisdom are prime examples of the dedication of these women to Islam and to the Holy Prophet(sa).

During the battle of Uhud, when the Muslims were facing defeat, it was Hadhrat Safiyah(ra) who left Madinah with a spear in her hand and aroused the sense of shame and honour among those who were abandoning the battlefield. Calling out to them in anger, she exclaimed, 'You have left the Messenger of Allah (on the battle field)!'

When the Holy Prophet(sa) saw Hadhrat Safiyah approaching the battlefield he signalled her son to keep her from seeing the dead body of her brother. When she learned of this, she said she was aware of her brother's dead body being mutilated but would bear it patiently.

Such noble acts of bravery; steadfastness and patience do not come without deep conviction and faith. Today, Islam does not need warriors with spears; Islam needs '*Callers unto Allah*'. If our dear ones falter or fall behind, it is our job to encourage, support and remind them of their obligations and duties, as Hadhrat Safiya(ra) did.

### **Khansa bint 'Amr**

Hadhrat Khansa bint 'Amr(ra) was very old when the Holy Prophet(sa) announced his prophethood. During the battle of Qadisiya she told her four sons to fight in the cause of Allah. She encouraged them by saying, 'My Children! You embraced Islam of your own will and you migrated to Madinah of your own will.

**CAN YOU IMAGINE, LOSING NOT FOUR, BUT JUST ONE CHILD? HOW DIFFICULT IT WOULD SEEM TO CONTINUE WITH LIFE AFTER THAT LOSS? BUT FOR HADHRAT KHANSA<sup>(RA)</sup>, IT WAS HER STRONG FAITH AND HER LOVE FOR ALLAH THAT GAVE HER THE UNFALTERING PATIENCE TO BEAR THE LOSS OF HER SONS. THIS LEVEL OF PATIENCE AND STEADFASTNESS ONLY COMES TO THE RIGHTEOUS.**

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Know it well that there is no work of greater reward than fighting in the way of Allah. The Eternal Life of the Hereafter is far better than the passing life of this world. Tomorrow, Allah willing, you will get up well in the morning. Then with great skill and praying to Allah for success, attack the enemy.'

How many of us would be ready and willing to send our children to battle, to send them to a place where death is a real possibility? The response of her sons, with one voice, was: 'O respected mother! Insha'Allah, we will meet your expectations and you will find us steadfast.' Such obedient children can only be the result of a pious mother's tireless efforts and prayers. The next

morning, all four sons of Hadhrat Khansa<sup>(ra)</sup> rode their horses into battle, reciting verses of the Holy Qur'an. They fought with great courage and valour, killing scores of enemy men. They all had the honour of being martyred.

Imagine, a mother who tells all of her sons to go to war, knowing full well that she may never see them again. After hearing news of their martyrdom, instead of weeping and crying, she fell into prostration before her Lord and said, 'Thanks to Allah, who blessed me with the martyrdom of my sons. I hope that on the day of judgement, my Lord will give me a place alongside my children.'



Can you imagine, losing not four, but just one child? How difficult it would seem to continue with life after that loss? But for Hadhrat Khansa<sup>(ra)</sup>, it was her strong faith and her love for Allah that gave her the unfaltering patience to bear the loss of her sons. This level of patience and steadfastness only comes to the righteous.

### Umme Sulaim

On another occasion, a man came to the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> in a very bad state and asked for food. It so happened that on that day there was nothing in the Prophet's<sup>(sa)</sup> house, so he looked towards his companions and said, 'Is there anyone who can take this man as his guest?' Hearing this, Hadhrat Abu Talha<sup>(ra)</sup> stood up and told the Prophet that he would take this man as his guest, having faith in the hospitality of his wife. When he came home, he asked his wife Hadhrat Umme Sulaim<sup>(ra)</sup> about food. She told him that there was only enough food for the children, and nothing else in the house.

So Hadhrat Umme Sulaim put the children to sleep hungry and placed the food before the guest. Hadhrat Umme Sulaim, pretending to adjust the candle, put it out, and the guest ate the food while Hadhrat Abu Tallah and Hadhrat Umme Sulaim sat with him in the darkness munching away pretending to eat. Such a noble and grand gesture of hospitality was shown to the guest. Not only did the host remain hungry but they also pretended to eat with the guest of Allah's messenger so that he would not feel embarrassed. The next morning, when Hadhrat Abu Talha went to the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>, he was reciting a newly revealed verse:

*But prefer others to themselves, even though poverty be their lot*  
(Ch.59:V.10)

The Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> then turned to Hadhrat Abu Talha and said, 'Your treatment last night of your guest is greatly liked by Allah.'

We hear countless examples of

**ISLAM IS A BALANCED RELIGION. IT TEACHES A REALISTIC WAY OF LIFE. IT DOES NOT TEACH EXTREMISM OF ANY SORT AS DEMONSTRATED WITH MANY INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE HOLY PROPHET(SA).**

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the hospitality and sacrifices, but how many of us act in such a selfless way as to give away our last blanket or to sleep in the cold and serve the guests in the same manner as Hadhrat Abu Talha and Umme Sulaim(ra). Such exemplary act of sacrifice and hospitality should be extended to every guest.

**Umme Waraqa bint Nawafal**

Islam is a complete way of life. It provides us with guidance in all matters of life. However, there are two main concepts that Islam revolves around: Peace and Obedience. Success and prosperity can be achieved only through obedience.

Hadhrat Umme Waraqa bint Nawafal(ra) had such a passion and desire to take part in the Battle of Badr, that she went to the Holy Prophet(saw) and requested permission to take part in the

Battle. She wished to attend to the sick and wounded soldiers and so that perhaps Allah might give her the blessings of martyrdom. The Holy Prophet(saw) said, 'You should remain in your house; perhaps Allah will give you the blessing of martyrdom there'. She obeyed the command of the Holy Prophet(saw) and gave up the idea of joining the soldiers on the battlefield. This is a quality of a true believer. They hear and they obey. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

*O ye who believe! Obey Allah and His Messenger.*  
(Ch.8: Vs.21)

**Hadhrat Khaula bint Hamkim(ra) – rational religion of Islam**

Islam is a balanced religion. It teaches a realistic way of life. It does not teach extremism of any sort as demonstrated with many

incidents in the life of the Holy Prophet(saw). This rationality is obvious when the Holy Prophet(saw) advised his companions. Hadhrat Khaula(ra) and her husband Hadhrat Uthman ibn Mza'un(ra) migrated to Madinah. Hadhrat Uthman was very pious and engaged in prayer and worship all day and night. This excessive indulgence in prayer and constant fasting made him ignore his wife and children.

One day, Hadhrat Khaula came to the household of the Holy Prophet(saw) extremely upset. The Ummahat al-Mu'minin (wives of the Holy Prophet(saw), seeing her so disturbed, enquired, 'Being married, why have you made yourself so miserable, even though your husband is one of the well-off people of the Quraish?' Hadhrat Khaula told them that her husband cared little for his wife and children, as he was busy in prayer all night and day.

When the Holy Prophet(saw) came home, the Ummahat al-Mu'minin told him about this incident. The Holy Prophet(saw)

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**The purpose of life is to worship Allah. But we must not let our worship become the cause of suffering for others around us. We must understand that the needs of our family are also our responsibility. Fulfilling this responsibility is also a form of worship.**

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went straight to Hadhrat Uthman and said 'Uthman, we are not commanded to adopt monasticism. I fear Allah more than I fear you. I offer prayer, fast and fulfill the right and obligations of my family. So your eye, body and family all have a right on you. Offer prayer and observe the fast but also fulfill the rights of your family.'

The purpose of life is to worship Allah. But we must not let our worship become the cause of suffering for others around us. We must understand that the

needs of our family are also our responsibility. Fulfilling this responsibility is also a form of worship. Islam emphasises rationality and common sense. The beauty of Islam is that it teaches us to look after the rights of everyone. No one is left uncared for. It teaches us to walk the middle path. It instructs us to keep a balance between the rights of our bodies, our families and our faith.

### **Fatima bint Khattab**

Determining this balanced path is not easy; it requires great faith, understanding and constant guidance from Allah. Hadhrat Fatima bint Khattab<sup>(ra)</sup> was a woman who possessed all these qualities. She was also known as Umme Jamil. She was the sister of Hadhrat Umar Farook<sup>(ra)</sup> and accepted Islam along with her husband in the early days. Her recitation of the beautiful verses of the Holy Qur'an softened the heart of Hadhrat Umar and thus, she became the means of his conversion to Islam. She was an intelligent woman of great determination and the Holy

Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>, himself, held her in a very high station.

### **Conclusion.**

These are but a few of the stories of the Women Companions of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. There is much to be learned from them; their examples have shown us the height of courage, bravery, sacrifices and absolute obedience.

May Allah bless us with women who are brave like Hadhrat Safiya<sup>(ra)</sup>, patient like Hadhrat Khansa<sup>(ra)</sup>, obedient like the Hadhrat Umme Waraqa<sup>(ra)</sup>, self-sacrificing like Hadhrat Umme Sulaim<sup>(ra)</sup>, and steadfast like Hadhrat Fatima bint Khattab<sup>(ra)</sup>.

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# A Brief Introduction to *The Daily Al-Fazl*.

*By Ahmad Mustansir, Department of English, Jamia Ahmadiyya (Junior Section) Rabwah*

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*The Daily Alfazl* Rabwah is an educational and religious paper of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Historically it is the oldest daily of the Sub-continent to have been continuously in print to date, except when its publication was banned by the government of Pakistan due to religious prejudice.

*Alfazl* was started by Sahibzada Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad (the second successor to the Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup>) on June 18 1913 during the lifetime of Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih I. The name *Alfazl* was given to the paper by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih I.

Since then the paper has been serving the Jama'at through the publication of articles on history, national and inter-

national affairs, the Jama'at's dynamic progress around the world and issues relating to the moral upbringing of the Jama'at.

When *Alfazl* was launched, it was initially published on a weekly basis. At the annual gathering of the Ahmadiyya Community in 1913 it was published for three consecutive days specifically for the local Jama'at of Qadian. Up to November 1915, it was being published three days a week but then for a while, the publication was limited to two days a week. From July 1924 to December 1925 it was published for three days a week. Then on 22 April 1930, it was decided to make the publication four days a week. However after some time this was reduced to three days a week.

Finally in March 7, 1935, it became a daily paper. Since then *Alfazl* has been serving the Jamaat in a remarkable way for about 91 years.

Some 9000 copies are printed daily and *Alfazl* also commands a large readership outside Pakistan. *Alfazl* has its own website, [www.alfazal.com](http://www.alfazal.com). A link to [alfazal.com](http://alfazal.com) is also available on the only official website of the Jama'at, [www.alislam.org](http://www.alislam.org).

After the infamous Presidential Ordinance of 1984, certain words are forbidden to be printed in *Alfazl*. Those words are replaced with others (which are not prohibited by law) or a dash mark. Some words such as Sahabi (follower of a prophet), Masjid (mosque), Muslim, Islam, tabligh (preaching Islam), Muballigh (one who preaches), Ishaat-e-deen: (spreading the religion of Islam), Ummul Momineen (mother of the believers, wife of

the prophet) etc., cannot be used by Ahmadi writers. The contents of *Alfazl* are also under the constant scrutiny of government agencies.

Mr Abdul Sami Khan is *Alfazl*'s current editor. Mr Fakhar ul Haq Shams and Mr Abdul Sattar Khan are the two members of the editorial board. The manager and his assistants are supervising administrative affairs. The manager and the publisher of the paper is Mr Agha Saifullah.

In 1953, when agitation began against the Ahmadis, the government of the Punjab Province of Pakistan banned *Alfazl* for one year lasting from February 1953- March 1954.

*Alfazl* was banned once again on 12 December 1984, when Zia ul Haq was the President of Pakistan. This ban lasted for four years and was the longest in the history of the paper. It was only after the ruling by the

Lahore High Court that the ban was lifted and the publication was restored on November 28, 1988.

In 1990, the government of the Punjab banned the publication of *Alfazl* for the third time. This ban lasted from 21 June to 20 August 1990. Editors of *Alfazl* have been imprisoned in the past. Mr Masood Ahmad Khan Dehlvi was imprisoned for two days in 1982. Imprisoned with him were Maulana Dost Muhammad Shahid a renowned scholar of the Jama'at and Mirza Abdul Rasheed a former employee of Tahrik Jadid in Rabwah, Pakistan. Again in 1994 Maulana Naseem Saifi jailed from 7 February 1994 to 8 March 1994 along with some of his colleagues, including Agha Saif Ullah, and Qazi Muneer Ahmad .

When *Alfazl* re-launched its publication on 28 November 1988 after a ban of about four years, its management faced a

barrage of court cases, which have continued to date. Currently there are about 50 such cases being heard against *Alfazl*'s' manager, editor and printer.

The Jama'at planned to establish its own printing press in Darul Nasar Gharbi Rabwah some thirty years ago but the government denied permission for this. The building originally meant for the Press, now houses the *Alfazl* office. Machinery bought for the press could not be used, but despite all these difficulties, *Alfazl* has continued to be produced.

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