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Jihad in Islam

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Misrepresentation of the Concept of Jihad

A Google search of the word “*jihad*” produces approximately one million, one hundred and thirty thousand entries, indicating this subject’s popularity. Before I start my discussion on the subject of *Jihad in Islam*, I would like to draw your attention to some quotations I have gathered. These quotations reflect the evolution and misrepresentation of this subject during the past two decades and identify the factors behind this development. I will then discuss the subject in light of the teachings of the Holy Quran, the actions and the sayings (*hadith*) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), and will conclude by examining the role the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and its founder played in explaining and furthering the correct Islamic perspective on the subject.

Quotation from Attorney-General Ashcroft in a radio interview with columnist Cal Thomas:

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.

Quotation from the book *Unveiling Islam* by Evangelist brothers Caner and Caner:

Talking heads on television continually pass along the politically correct notion that **Jihad** means ‘internal struggle for piety’ and not military engagement. Yet it does not require a cleric’s teaching to see that the Qur’an promises Paradise to those who die in battle for Islam more certainly than it promises salvation to anyone else. The Hadith makes it transparent that jihad has its primary characteristic a bloody struggle involving military battles...The promise of eternal security is the ultimate motive behind the passion for Allah in the eager young Muslim warrior. He follows the footsteps of the messenger Muhammad, who fought for the cause of Allah. He is obeying the noble words of the Qur’an and Hadith, which legitimize his use of the sword.

Quotation from Bin Laden (as presented in *Unveiling Islam*)

In their effort to link the infamous day of 9-11 to the teachings of Islam, Caner and Caner, as cited above, state in the introduction to their book on page 23:

Considering the fate of one of the willing martyrs of that operation, Bin Laden quotes the Hadith: 'I was ordered to fight the people until they say there is no god but Allah, and his prophet Muhammad.'

After quoting more excerpts from the tape Caner and Caner conclude with the statement: "For those not familiar with the Qur'an and Hadith, the tape was a shock. For those of us who know these foundations of Muslim faith, it was sad validation."

Quotations from the News Media

In a [CNN](#) World Affairs report by Ralph Begleiter, airing on March 7, 1999, entitled *Legacy of Afghanistan Haunts Both Cold War Superpowers*, the following dialogue transpired:

In the Afghanistan war, Washington, together with allies in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, had covertly trained and equipped **Muslim zealots** to help defeat the Soviets.

In September 1986, the first U.S.-made Stinger missiles arrived in Afghanistan, courtesy of the CIA.

MILTON BEARDEN, FORMER CIA CHIEF IN PAKISTAN: The turnaround in the war was almost instantaneous.

BEARDEN: The first Stinger shoot-downs of MI-24 (ph) helicopters sent a shockwave through the Soviet air force, and by late 1986 and into 1987, the **Mujahedin** were bringing down one aircraft per day...

MCINTYRE: Sources say the missiles were funneled to the Afghan resistance through Pakistan's intelligence agency. The CIA believes some were skimmed off by Pakistan before they were distributed to as many as seven different **Mujahedin groups**, groups then considered freedom fighters, groups who now provide refuge to Osama bin Laden, dubbed a terrorist kingpin by the U.S.

CARDAMONE: I think the worst thing that could happen would be for Osama bin Laden to have control over a handful of these that are very effective. They're among the best of the type in the world. It's just frightening what could happen with these missiles.

MCINTYRE: By the time the Soviets withdrew in 1989, the U.S. had smuggled some 2,000 Stingers to the **Mujahedin** by way of Pakistan. In the early '90s, the CIA, according to sources, managed to covertly buy back about 100 Stingers, paying as much as \$150,000 apiece for a missile that originally retailed for \$55,000. A decade later, at least 200 of the deadly missiles are still unaccounted for and now pose a potential threat to the United States and its interests around the world.

[Washington Post](#) investigators report that during the past twenty years the US has spent millions of dollars produc-

ing fanatical schoolbooks, which were then distributed in Afghanistan.

The primers, which were filled with talk of **jihad** and featured drawings of guns, bullets, soldiers and mines, have served since then [i.e., since the violent destruction of the Afghan secular government in the early 1990s] as the Afghan school system's core curriculum. Even the Taliban used the American-produced books... [*Washington Post*, 23 March 2002 (1)].

According to the *Washington Post*, the U.S. is now "...wrestling with the unintended consequences of its successful strategy of stirring Islamic fervor to fight communism."

[BBC News](#) reported on April 1, 2003 that the following message by Saddam Hussein was read out on Iraqi state television by Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf. In the statement, Saddam urges 'jihad' by stating:

...Yes, O brothers, for ages and ages, **religious scholars** could not reach such a consensus as they have reached today - that this aggression against the fortress of faith is an aggression on religion, wealth, honor and life and is an aggression against the homes of Islam.

Therefore, **jihad (holy war)** is a duty in facing them and whoever dies on its fields is rewarded by heaven.

Seize it (**jihad**), O brothers, for within it are one of two good deeds for the sake of God and great principles [*BBC NEWS*, Tuesday, 1 April, 2003, 22:05 GMT 23:05 UK].

I have deliberately put in bold the words, *Jihad* and *Mujahedin* in these quotations to underscore how terrorists, politicians, media and the extreme evangelical movement have either misunderstood, or deliberately misused the word *Jihad* to further their own agenda. These quotations also show how this misinterpretation has led to the greatest tragedies of our time. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out how the seeds of the worldwide terrorism we face today were sown and nurtured in the cold war era, eventually leading to the horror of nine eleven.

These quotations are meant to convey the message that, as Muslims, we are duty bound to understand the true meaning of *Jihad* as it applies to us, and to convey its real meaning to the rest of the world. This is the only way to advance the cause of our faith and our own spiritual reformation.

The True meaning of Jihad

If one were to pick up an ordinary dictionary of the Arabic language, the meaning of the word *Jihad* could have been easily understood. Imam Raghīb (famous lexicologist) explains that the word *Jihad* is derived from *jahd* or *juhd* meaning *ability*, *exertion* or *power*, and *Jihad* and

Mujahida mean *the exerting of one's power in repelling the enemy*. The same authority then goes on to say: “*Jihad* is of three kinds; *viz.*, the carrying on of a struggle: 1. against a visible enemy, 2. against the devil, and 3. against self (*nafs*). According to Lane's Lexicon, *jahada*, properly signifies *the using or exerting of one's utmost power, efforts, endeavors or ability in contending with an object of disapprobation*; and this is of three kinds, namely a visible enemy, the devil, and one's self; all of which are included in the term as used in the Kuran. The word *Jihad* is, therefore, far from being synonymous with the word *war*; the meaning of *Jihad* being “war undertaken for the propagation of Islam”, which is supposed by many Western writers to be the primary significance of the word, is unknown equally to the Arabic language and the teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

We will discuss this subject in light of the Quran and Hadith to clarify this misrepresentation.

Jihad in The Holy Quran

It is clear from the Qur'an that the word *jihad* has been used therein to mean ‘striving’ or ‘exerting’. For instance:

- “Those who strive (*jaahada*) for Us, We guide them in Our ways” (26:69). Here the meaning is to carry on a spiritual struggle to attain nearness to God.
- “Whoever strives (*jaahada*), he only strives for his own self” (29:6). The meaning here again is struggle for self-purification.
- “We have enjoined on man to do good to his parents. But if they *strive* (*jaahadaa*) with you to worship that of which you have no knowledge [i.e. false gods], then obey them not” (29:8). Here the meaning is that of ‘arguing’ or ‘disputing’, and is applied to an act of unbelievers.
- “Strive for God a true striving (*jihad*):” (22:78); “Obey not the unbelievers and hypocrites, and strive against them a mighty striving (*jihad*) with it [i.e. the Qur'an]” (25:52). Both of these verses give the command to conduct *jihad*. The first refers to a *jihad* for attaining nearness to God. The second mentions a *jihad* against the deniers of Islam, not by the sword, but by means of the Qur'an itself. It is called a “mighty jihad”, and is a constant duty.

The Qur'an has also used the word *qu'ood* to mean the opposite of the word *jihad*, thereby clarifies the meaning of *jihad* itself. For instance:

Those believers who *sit back* (*qaidoon*), not disabled by injury, are not equal to those who do *jihad* in the way of God (*mujahidoon*) with their wealth and lives. (4:95)

Accordingly, *Qu'ood* is to sit back and be lazy, whereas *Jihad*, in contrast to this, means ‘making a full effort’ even at the cost of one's life. Islam's greatest jihad is, therefore, not by means of the sword, but by means of the Holy Qur'an, that is, a missionary effort to establish Islam. We are further told that there should always be among Muslims a party who invite people to Islam:

And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and these it is that shall be successful (3:103).

Thus the missionary jihad of Islam is to be carried on in all circumstances. The sword could never be used to force Islam on others, compulsion in religion being forbidden in clear words: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2: 256).

Imam Fakhar-ud-Din Razi, the great classical commentator of the Quran, writes in his renowned exposition of the Quran:

As for the verse, ‘Strive against them a great *jihad*’, some say that this refers to efforts in preaching. Others say that it refers to fighting. Some others say it includes both. The first meaning is the most accurate because this verse was revealed at Makka, and the command to fight came after the emigration (*Tafsir Kabir*; vol. iv, p. 330).

Similarly, another classical commentary, the *Ruh al-Bayan*, comments on the hadith, “The best *jihad* is to speak a word of truth to a tyrant”, by stating: “It is the best because *jihad* with arguments and proofs is a *jihad* which is greater as compared to *jihad* with the sword which is a lesser *jihad*.”

Example of The Holy Prophet At Makka

Although the Holy Prophet Muhammad had received revelations ordering *jihad* while he was still a resident of Makka and before the emigration to Madina [“Strive for God a true striving (*jihad*)” (22:78); “Obey not the unbelievers and hypocrites, and strive against them a mighty striving (*jihad*) with it (i.e. the Qur'an)” (25:52)], he did not raise the sword against the unbelievers who were bitterly persecuting him and his followers. Notwithstanding, he was most certainly conducting a *jihad* in Makka in obedience to these verses. This was a *jihad* of following the word of God and propagating the message of Islam. This mode of conduct clearly proves that *jihad* was not equivalent to *war* in the Holy Prophet's eyes. During this period of persecution at Makka, when some of his Companions asked permission to fight, the Holy Prophet said: I have been commanded to forgive, so do not fight (Hadith collection *Nasa'i*, Book of Jihad).

Example of the Holy Prophet At Madina

The Muslims emigrated to Madina and took refuge there, yet their enemies from Makka did not leave them alone.

They threatened the then chief of Madina, Abdullah Ibn Ubayy, in a letter as follows:

O people of Madina, you have given refuge to our adversary. We swear by God that if you do not fight them or expel them, we shall come against you and kill your fighting men and capture your women (*Abu Dawud*, vol. ii, p. 495).

Not content with this threat, the unbelievers of Makka decided to attack Madina and annihilate Islam and the Muslims by the sword. It was then only that God permitted the Muslims to conduct *jihad* with the sword, because not to do so would have meant suicide for the Muslims. Therefore, in year 2 of the *Hijra* (emigration to Madina) the following Quranic verse was revealed:

Permission to fight is given to those upon whom war is made, because they have been wronged — and God is well able to help them. Those who have been expelled from their homes unjustly, only for saying, ‘Allah is our Lord’. And if God had not allowed one group of people to repel another, then there would have been pulled down cloisters and synagogues and churches and mosques, in which God’s name is remembered (22:39,40).

Four conditions are given here for allowing *jihad* by the sword: 1) Fighting has to be initiated by the unbelievers, as is clear from the words “those upon whom war is made”; 2) There has to be extreme persecution of the Muslims — “because they have been wronged”; 3) The aim of the unbelievers has to be the destruction of Islam and the Muslims and freedom of worship, as is clear from the words “there would have been pulled down cloisters and synagogues and churches and mosques in which God’s name is remembered.”; 4) The object of the Muslims must only be self-defense and protection, as shown by the words “if God had not allowed one people to *repel* another”.

The only other verse allowing fighting in the Quran states: “Fight in the way of God those who fight you, but do not go over the limit” (2:190). Hence, the command in the Holy Quran to fight, or conduct *jihad* with the sword, is subject to the above conditions.

Invitation to Islam

The Holy Prophet himself wrote letters to kings in the 6th year of *Hijra*, inviting them to accept Islam. For instance:

Ibn Abbas reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) wrote to the Caesar inviting him to Islam, and sent his letter to him with Dihyah al-Kalbi, and the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) ordered him to make it over to the Chief of Busra that he might send it to the Caesar”. (B.56: 102).

It should be noted that this hadith forms part of the chapter on *Jihad* in *Bukhari*, again illustrating the wide sense in which *jihad* was interpreted by Muslims. The subject matter of the letter written, presented in the next hadith, should be treated as a supplement to the previous hadith.

Ibn-Abbas reported...And this (letter) ran as follows: In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. From Muhammad, the servant of Allah and His Messenger, to Heraclius, the Chief of the Roman Empire. Peace be with him who follows the guidance. After this, I invite thee with invitation to Islam. Become a Muslim and thou wilt be in peace - Allah will give thee a double reward; but if thou turnest away, on thee will be the sin of thy subjects. And, O followers of the book! Come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah, and that we shall not associate aught with Him, and that some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah; but if they turn back, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims.” (B.1: 1).

As is can be seen, in none of these letters is the use of force even implied.

Complete Religious Tolerance

The Holy Prophet Muhammad taught that every person is responsible only to God for his beliefs, and no man is entitled to question or persecute another for conscience sake. The Prophet condemned all religious persecution when he said that people will not be punished for their disbelief or erroneous beliefs in this life, but rather in the life after death. In this life, he continued, they have only to account for their actions. Thus, he preached a religious toleration that had never been known to the world before.

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) put the religion of universal toleration into practice; he awarded protection of life and property to the followers of other religions in the same way as he did in the case of a Muslim. He permitted them to follow their own religion and observe their own rites.

The Holy Prophet granted numerous concessions to Christians. No conquering race of faith has given to its subjects a nobler guarantee than is to be found in the following words of the Prophet:

To the Christians of Najran and the surrounding territories the security of God and the pledge of His Prophet are extended for their lives, their religion and their property to the present as well as the absent and others besides; there shall be no interference with (the practice of) their faith or their observances; nor any change in their rights or privileges; no bishop shall be removed from his bishopric, nor any monk from his monastery, nor any priest from his priesthood, and they shall continue to enjoy everything,

great and small, as heretofore; no image or cross shall be destroyed: they shall not oppress nor be oppressed: they shall not practice the rights of blood-vengeance as in the days of ignorance: no tithes shall be levied from them nor shall they be required to furnish provisions for the troops (Syed Ameer Ali, *Spirit of Islam*).

Similar concessions were granted to the Zoroastrians in Arabia. I'll give a few extracts from the Prophet's letter to Farrukh bin Shakhsan, the head of a fire-temple:

This is the letter from the Apostle of God (may God bless him!) to the freed man Farrukh B. Shakhsan, brother of Salman Farsi (may God be pleased with him!), and to his family and posterity that he may have, as long as they exist, regardless of which of them will turn Moslem or will remain faithful to his (original) creed.

This is my letter: verily upon him (i.e., Farrukh B. Shakhsan) be the protection of God, also upon his sons with regard to their lives and property, in the lands in which they live, plains or hills; as well as freedom of use of the wells and pastures which they possess. They must not be treated unjustly or oppressed. And those who this my letter will read must protect them (i.e., the Zoroastrians), leave them free, prevent offences from others, and show not hostility to them by insult or by using force.

They are entirely free in their possessions of fire-temples as well as the land and other property attached to the latter. No one also should restrict them in the use of rich dress, the use of stirrups, construction of buildings or stables, performing burials, or observing anything which is accepted in their religion or sects. They must be treated better than all other (non-Muslim) peoples under protection (*Ahad Namah*, published by the Iran League, Bombay).

Appreciation of this spirit of tolerance is best illustrated by the memorable sentence of the Nestorian Patriarch Isho' Yahb III (A.D. 650-660) in which he stated:

The Arabs to whom God has given at this time the government of the world,... do not persecute the Christian religion; on the contrary, they favour it, honour our priests and the saints of the Lord, and confer benefits on churches and monasteries.

Jihad in The Hadith

Just as the Holy Quran has used the word *jihad* in a very wide sense, so to is it used in Hadith. For instance:

- The Holy Prophet said: Do *jihad* against the idolators with your wealth, lives and tongues" (*Mishkat*, Book of *Jihad*, ch. 1, sec. 2).
- The Holy Prophet was asked: Which *jihad* is best? He said: He who does *jihad* against the idolators with his wealth and life (ibid.).

- A group of Muslim soldiers came to the Holy Prophet [from a battle]. He said: Welcome, you have come from the lesser *jihad* to the greater *jihad*. It was said: What is the greater *jihad*? He said: The striving of a servant against his low desires (*Al-Tasharraf*, Part I, p. 70).
- The Holy Prophet said: The greatest *jihad* is to speak the word of truth to a tyrant (*Mishkat*, Book of Rulership and Judgment, ch. 1, sec. 2).
- The Holy Prophet said: Do *jihad* against your desires as you do *jihad* against your foes (*Mufradat*, under root *j-h-d*, p. 100).
- The Holy Prophet said: Do *jihad* against the unbelievers with your hands and tongues (ibid.).
- *Jihad* involves four things: enjoining the doing of good, forbidding the doing of evil, speaking the truth in a situation of trial, and having enmity for the wrong-doer.
- The most excellent *jihad* is the Hajj. (*Bukhari*, Book of Sacrifices, 25:4)
- The *mujahid* [one engaged in *jihad*] is he who strives against his own self to obey God.

These hadith make it clear that *jihad* means to exert oneself to the utmost, whether by means of one's wealth or tongue or hands or life, whether it is against one's desires or a visible enemy, whether its aim is to attain nearness to God or to propagate the word of God. To summarize, the Holy Quran and Hadith speak of three kinds of *jihad*: 1) A great *jihad*; 2) The greatest *jihad*; 3) A lesser *jihad*. The first two are to be undertaken constantly, while the third, which includes *jihad* by means of the sword, is only undertaken if specific conditions are satisfied.

Hadith to be interpreted in light of the Quran

Misinterpretation of Hadith has occurred due to the disregard of the most fundamental rule of Hadith interpretation; that is, interpreting it subject to the principles set by the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Prophet himself laid down this rule: "My sayings do not abrogate the word of Allah, but the word of Allah can abrogate my sayings" (*Al-Mishkat al-Masabih* 1:6, iii).

Disregarding this principle rule can lead to misinterpretation and misdeeds. This is well illustrated by the Bin Laden statement referred to earlier:

Quotation from "Unveiling Islam": "Considering the fate of one of the willing martyrs of that operation, Bin Laden quotes the Hadith: "I was ordered to fight the people until they say there is no god but Allah, and his prophet Muhammad."

Let us closely look at this Hadith and then study it in light of the Holy Quran. The Hadith states:

Ibn Umar reported, The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said: "I have been commanded that I should fight these people till they bear witness that there is no god but Allah and keep up prayer and pay zakat. When they do this, their blood and their property shall be safe with me except as Islam requires, and their reckoning is with Allah (B.2: 16)."

It should first of all be noted that the hadith begins with the words, "I have been commanded", and the command to fight is contained in the Holy Qur'an in the following words: "And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you and do not exceed this limit" (2:190 Holy Qur'an). Muslims, therefore, could not resort to fighting unless an enemy was the first to assume hostilities. Keeping this in mind clearly indicates that what the hadith means is that fighting begun under these conditions is to cease when the enemy accepts Islam. Bukhari himself hints at this when he quotes the hadith under the heading: "But if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, then leave their way free," i.e., cease fighting with them. Misinterpretation of this Hadith clearly shows the willful ignorance of both parties, i.e., Bin Laden and the hostile evangelical composers of the Book, "Unveiling Islam."

Directions Relating to War

The Holy Prophet's directions to his soldiers also show that the wars he engaged in were not due to any desire to enforce religion. For instance, "Abd Allah ibn Umar reports that in a certain battle fought by the Holy Prophet a woman was discovered among the slain. On this, the Holy Prophet forbade the killing of women and children (in wars)" (Bu. 56:147, 148). Hadith relating to this prohibition are repeated very often in all collections (See: AD. 15:112; Tr. 20:18; Ah. I, p. 256; II, pp. 22, 23; III, p. 488; M. 32:7). Now if the wars of Islam had been undertaken with the object of forcing Islam upon a people, why should women and children have been exempt? It would rather have been easier to win them over by holding the sword over their heads, because women and children naturally do not have the power to resist, like men who can fight. The fact that there is an express direction against killing three fourths of the population, that is all women and children must be in every community, shows that the propagation of religion was far from being the object of these wars. In some Hadith the word *'asif* is added to *women* and *children*, showing that there was also a prohibition against killing people who were taken along with the army as "labour units" (Ah. III, p. 488; IV, p. 178; AD. 15:112). There is yet another Hadith prohibiting the killing of *shaikh fāni* (very old man) who is unable to fight (MM. 18:5-ii). Monks were also not to be

molested (Ah. I, p. 300). It was only in a night attack that the Holy Prophet excused the chance killing of a woman or child saying, "They are among them" (Bu. 56:146); what he meant was that it was a thing which could not be avoided, for at night children and women could not be distinguished from the soldiers.

The above examples may be supplemented by some others taken from Sayyid Amir 'Ali's *Spirit of Islam*. The following instructions were given to the troops dispatched against the Byzantines by the Holy Prophet: "In avenging the injuries inflicted upon us, molest not the harmless inmates of domestic seclusion; spare the weakness of the female sex; injure not the infant at the breast, or those who are ill in bed. Abstain from demolishing the dwellings of the unresisting inhabitants; destroy not the means of their subsistence, nor their fruit trees; and touch not the palm" (p. 81).

Prisoners of War

The treatment of prisoners of war, as laid down in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith, also bears evidence of the fact that the idea of enforcement of Islam by the sword is entirely foreign to the conception of Islamic warfare. If the wars, during the time of the Holy Prophet or early Caliphate, had been prompted by the desire of propagating Islam by force, this object could easily have been attained by forcing Islam upon prisoners of war who fell into the hands of the Muslims. Yet this the Holy Qur'an does not allow, expressly laying down that they must be set free:

So when you meet in battle those who disbelieve, smite the necks; then when you have overcome them, make them prisoners, and afterwards set them free as a favour or for ransom until the war lays down its burdens (47:4).

It will be seen from this that the taking of prisoners was allowed only as long as war conditions prevailed; and even when the prisoners are taken they cannot be kept so permanently, but must be set free either as a favour or at the utmost by taking ransom. The Holy Prophet carried this injunction into practice in his lifetime. In the battle of Hunain, six thousand prisoners of the Hawazin tribe were taken, and they were all set free simply as an act of favour (Bu. 40:7; IJ-H. III, p. 132). A hundred families of Bani Mustaliq were taken as prisoners in the battle of Muraisi', all being set at liberty without ransom being paid (IJ-H. III, p. 66). Seventy prisoners were taken in the battle of Badr, and it was only in this case that ransom was exacted, but the prisoners were granted their freedom while war with the Quraish was yet in progress (AD. 15:122; Ah. I, p. 30). The form of ransom adopted in the case of some of these prisoners was that they should be entrusted with some work connected with teaching others some form of knowledge (Ah. I, p. 247; ZI, p. 534). When war ceased and peace was established, all war-prisoners are to be set free,

according to the verse quoted above. It is recorded that a prisoner of war testified that he was kept in a family whose people gave him bread, while they themselves had to live on dates (IJ-H. II, p. 287). Therefore, prisoners of war were not only set free but, as long as they were kept prisoners, they were kept honourably.

Jihad — today's situation and a hundred years ago.

There are amazing parallels between the situation today and over a hundred years ago when the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), began his mission of presenting the religion of Islam to the world. One of the most formidable obstacles he faced was that there was a slur and stigma widely prevailing against Islam relating to the concept of *jihad*. It was alleged, mainly by Christian and Western critics, that Islam tells its followers to indulge in acts of violence against people of other faiths and that it highly commends and extols those of its followers who perpetrate such violence and promises them a place in paradise in the next life. On the one hand this was thrown as an accusation against Islam, but on the other a handful of Muslim religious leaders and their followers reinforced exactly the same idea by their statements and their actions, that Islam does indeed allow, encourage and urge the use of violence and shedding of blood in order to conquer and subdue people of other religions.

This slur was not only causing hatred and prejudice against Islam in the world, and hindering the progress and understanding of it, but it meant that when someone like the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement arose with the mission of spreading Islam it was suspected that their objective was to start an armed uprising to overthrow the existing rulers by violence and acts of terrorism. So the Founder of this Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, had to explain in detail, and repeatedly, that the popular notion of jihad in the minds of people, whether non-Muslims or a large section of Muslims, was entirely contrary to the real teachings of Islam. Reading his lengthy statements on this subject, one striking point is made plain: he is very anxious to convey his message to Muslims of other Islamic countries, outside his own country India, that they should reject the wrong concept of jihad.

Position of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad on Jihad

Hazrat Mirza had written:

I wrote books in Arabic and Persian in order to spread this teaching of the prohibition of *jihad* to other countries, thousands of rupees being spent on their printing and publication. All those books were published in *Arabia, the lands of Syria, Turkey, Egypt, Baghdad and Afghanistan*. I believe some day these will show their effect. (*Kitab al-Bariyya*, p. 7–8)

Amazingly, these are the very countries in the news nowadays in connection with the wrong and twisted doctrine of jihad. The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement sent good advice to these countries for their own benefit, a hundred years ago. Perhaps the All-Knowing Allah had shown him the dangerous consequences that may befall these countries as a result of pursuing the wrong concept of jihad.

Hazrat Mirza's Urdu Pamphlet *The British Government and Jihad* is also very much applicable today to the relations between Muslims and Western governments. In this publication, Hazrat Mirza explains that the Holy Prophet was not the first to raise the sword, yet when he did it was only after suffering intense persecution from his enemies for a long time. His followers also acted on the same principle. They showed such patience and perseverance and restraint that there is no other example of it in the world. However, this was not because they were weak or cowardly or unable to retaliate. They were courageous, brave and strong people. This was proved after they were permitted to fight, when they fought against enormous odds and won. So they displayed patience and restraint while possessing the capability and skill of fighting in battle. During this period of persecution, the Holy Prophet never tried to think of some means of fighting back but told his followers that Allah had commanded him to show patience. Hazrat Mirza then asks: As Muslims have this most excellent example of forbearance and restraint, of which they can be proud over the whole world, then to discard this example is the height of foolishness and a great misfortune by your own hands. Then he goes on to depict the kind of atrocities that are perpetrated in the name of Islam and religion. He argues that the ignorant religious leaders have greatly deceived the masses and declared acts of brutality, cruelty and inhumanity to be the key to attaining paradise, and then poses the question:

Is it a virtuous deed that there is a man going about in the market place, we have no connection with him so much so that we don't know his name and he doesn't know our name, but despite this we take a shot at him intending to kill him? Is this religious behaviour?

He then contrasts this type of behaviour with those holy early Muslims whom Allah instructed in Makka not to respond with violence even if they were cut to pieces and states:

Alas, today the religious leaders have forgotten all those events, and think that to fire a gun at an innocent man constitutes Islam.

He again asks:

It is a matter of regret and of shame that a man whom we do not know at all, who has no enmity with us,

and he is going about his lawful business, we shoot him dead and in an instant make his wife a widow, his children fatherless and his house a place of mourning. Is such killing taught in the Quran or Hadith? Can any Muslim religious leader answer?

Today, the ignorant ones have merely heard the word *jihad* and are using it as a pretext and cover for satisfying their own selfish ends, or purely out of fanaticism and lunacy are perpetrating bloodshed. In those days the wrong view of *jihad* was being propagated particularly in the North-Western Provinces of India, adjacent to Afghanistan, and within Afghanistan itself. Referring to it in this book, Hazrat Mirza advised the king of Afghanistan to gather a forum of learned, distinguished Islamic scholars to discuss the doctrine of *jihad*, and then through these scholars to educate the general public of the country on the error of the misconceived view of *jihad*. He proposed that books should also be published on this subject and widely distributed. In this way, he explained, the fervour for indulging in acts of violence in the name of *jihad* will be reduced. It would be a great service by a Muslim ruler, he says, to get the general Muslim public freed from the clutches of the ignorant religious leaders who are inciting them to commit violence under the name of *jihad*.

Hazrat Mirza, therein, also points out to the British government of India that the second reason why these atrocities are being committed, in the name of becoming a hero or martyr for the religion of Islam, is that the Christian and Western critics of Islam have reinforced the false idea that Islam teaches this kind of *jihad* through their books and magazines spread throughout the country. This, he says, has led to many ignorant fanatics who know nothing of their own religion to actually believe that it is an act of great reward to kill the unbelievers. These writings have damaged harmony and reconciliation in the country, and sown the seeds of enmity between the communities. To deal with this problem, he advised the government to follow the example of the Turkish government (the biggest and main Muslim government of that time) which adopted a trial measure that for a few years it would be prohibited for any religious faction, in their writings or speeches, to make any mention of other religions, but only to teach the good points of its own religion. In this way, new discords will not develop, old grudges will gradually be forgotten, and people will turn towards mutual harmony and concord.

In another publication, addressing the government of his time, Hazrat Mirza has summarized the teachings of Islam on the point regarding the use of violence against others in support of one's religion in the following way:

The Quran teaches that Muslims, bearing the persecution and pain inflicted upon them, must invite others to the truth with gentleness. In particular with

regard to Christians the Holy Quran instructs: "Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and argue with them in the best manner" (16:126), best manner meaning politely and in a civilized way. The truth does not stand in need of force to spread it. Use of force actually proves that your arguments are weak. God also revealed to His Holy Prophet: "Be patient as are men of resolution patient", meaning that the Holy Prophet should show such patience that it is no less than the sum total of the patience shown by all the previous prophets. Then God also revealed: "There is no compulsion in religion". And again He said that the true believers are those who "restrain their anger and forgive people". Can the God Who gives this teaching also say that you should kill those who don't accept your religion, rob them of their property and make their homes desolate? This is only the misconception of the ignorant among the common Muslim religious leaders and the unwise Christian and Western critics of Islam, which is groundless and without foundation.

Message to Members of his Movement

It has been shown by the foregoing that it is the *jihad* of "self-purification" that is a fundamental, permanent and unconditional part of Islam. He writes:

Those who join my army, I order them to give up these misconceived ideas of *jihad* with the sword, and to purify their hearts, develop and nurture their feelings of mercy towards all humankind and be helpers of those in distress and suffering. They should spread peace on the earth, as this is how their religion will spread. Be not surprised as to how this can happen. For just as God has created the modern inventions of the present times for the physical needs of man, similarly He will meet the spiritual needs of mankind by causing the light and the message of truth to spread widely and far by means of these very ways of communication and transport. ■

PRIMARY SOURCES:

- 1 *The Religion of Islam* by Maulana Muhammad Ali.
- 2 *The Ahmaddiyya Case* by Maulana Hafiz Sher Muhammad, edited by Dr. Zahid Aziz.
- 3 *The Ideal Prophet* by Khawaja Kamal-ud-Din.
- 4 *Speech at the A.A.I.L. U.S Convention, August 2002 Convention, August 2002* by Zahid Aziz, Editor *The Light*.

Note: For key to the abbreviated references of Hadith, refer to *Religion of Islam* by Maulana Muhammad Ali.