

Qhutbah, Insha Allah, Friday, Dec 27, 2008

Alhamdu lillah, wa ash hadu ala ila ha ill lallah

Bismillah hir Rahman nir Rahim

The subject of *jihad* has remained under discussion among both Muslims and non-Muslims for a long time. In context of what happened in Mumbai on and after Nov 26, 08 we hear the word *jihad* being used even more frequently than before. Most people, including an overwhelming majority of the Muslims are ignorant of the true meaning of the Quran. People think that Islam is a fanatic advocate and patron of war, which it encourages and that Islam was spread by the sword. The term *jihadi* has attained a very derogatory connotation. People make a very grave mistake when they speak of *jihad* but mean *qitaal*, which is the word for war. No one is ready to check the Quran and see what it says on the issue of war, its true status and laws. Should not its meaning and implication be understood in light of Quranic teaching?

Literally speaking, *jihad* means struggle and / or striving in the cause of God and in its widest scope includes killing and being killed in His cause. There are 2 different aspects of *jihad* - 1) against Satan and all enemies of God and His religion and 2) against the evil inclinations of one's inner self.

The injunctions on *jihad* and *qitaal* are so abundant and comprehensible in the Quran that they leave no reservation or uncertainty in the minds of believers about the spirit of these very clear commands. These are important, undoubtedly, or they would not have been mentioned around 28 and 34 times respectively.

When can we then resort to war? War, as such, is only allowed as a measure of security, and is restricted to fighting in self-defense. All aggressors have been strongly condemned. As long as disputes can be settled through conciliatory means and rights and claims can be peacefully attained and imposed, we are required to refrain from fighting. Only, when there is no other option, must we then fight with full vitality and induce the enemy to see his relief in peaceful and equitable co-existence with the believers.

Rules of War [2:190] You may fight in the cause of GOD against those who attack you, but do not aggress. GOD does not love the aggressors. [2:191] You may kill those who wage war against you, and you may evict them whence they evicted you. Oppression is worse than murder. Do not fight them at the Sacred Masjid, unless they attack you therein. If they attack you, you may kill them. This is the just retribution for those disbelievers. [2:192] If they refrain, then GOD is Forgiver, Most Merciful. [2:193] You may also fight them to eliminate oppression, and to worship GOD freely. If they refrain, you shall not aggress; aggression is permitted only against the aggressors. The footnote for 2:190 - All fighting is regulated by the basic rule in 60: 8-9. Fighting is allowed

strictly in self-defense, while aggression and oppression are strongly condemned throughout the Quran.

If we read these three verses together we can see very clearly that the underlying principal of war is to curb and eradicate oppression, whenever and wherever it arises in the cause and way of God. It is not confined to war only when one is personally subjected to oppression, but it is incumbent upon all believers to help smother oppression wherever it is perpetrated. Any believer who has the means and strength to stand up and resist oppression is commanded in very unequivocal terms to fight against it until it is quashed. [9:91] *Not to be blamed are those who are weak, or ill, or do not find anything to offer, so long as they remain devoted to GOD and His messenger. The righteous among them shall not be blamed. GOD is Forgiver, Most Merciful.* [9:92] *Also excused are those who come to you wishing to be included with you, but you tell them, "I do not have anything to carry you on." They then turn back with tears in their eyes, genuinely saddened that they could not afford to contribute.* [9:93] *The blame is on those who ask your permission to stay behind, even though they have no excuse. They have chosen to be with the sedentary. Consequently, GOD has sealed their hearts, and thus, they do not attain any knowledge.*

In other words, it is imperative for Muslims to not only defend and guard their own rights and freedom, but they are commanded to crush oppression (*fitna*) whenever they come across it. There is so much emphasis on this command that one should ponder the strong words used in condemning oppressors.

The Believers are Fearless [4:75] Why should you not fight in the cause of GOD when weak men, women, and children are imploring: "Our Lord, deliver us from this community whose people are oppressive, and be You our Lord and Master."

Believers could fight when we are forced out of the land. *Synagogues, Churches, and Masjids [22:39] Permission is granted to those who are being persecuted, since injustice has befallen them, and GOD is certainly able to support them. [22:40] They were evicted from their homes unjustly, for no reason other than saying, "Our Lord is GOD." If it were not for GOD's supporting of some people against others, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and masjids - where the name of GOD is commemorated frequently - would have been destroyed. Absolutely, GOD supports those who support Him. GOD is Powerful, Almighty.*

Believers could fight when the enemies of Islam impose war. *Divine Help for the Oppressed [22:60] It is decreed that if one avenges an injustice that was inflicted upon him, equitably, then he is persecuted because of this, GOD will surely support him. GOD is Pardoner, Forgiving. [8:56] You reach agreements with them, but they violate their agreements every time; they are not righteous. [8:57] Therefore, if you encounter them in war, you shall set them up as a deterrent example for those who come after them, that they may take heed. [9:12] If they violate their oaths after pledging to keep their covenants, and attack your religion, you may fight the leaders of paganism - you are no longer bound by your covenant with them - that they may refrain.*

Despotism and repression must be resisted with full force. Short of initiating aggression, believers are directed to crush oppression with everything under their command. This is because God does not love the oppressors. What is the meaning of the word oppression - it is the creation of disorder, the act of subjugating by cruelty, the state of being kept down by unjust use of force or authority, to be repressed, subjugated, subdued, where there is coercion, cruelty, tyranny, intimidation, viciousness and brutality.

God has made life sacred. *[17:33] You shall not kill any person - for GOD has made life sacred - except in the course of justice. If one is killed unjustly, then we give his heir authority to enforce justice. Thus, he shall not exceed the limits in avenging the murder; he will be helped. Grossness of Murder [5:32] Because of this, we decreed for the Children of Israel that anyone who murders any person who had not committed murder or horrendous crimes, it shall be as if he murdered all the people. And anyone who spares a life, it shall be as if he spared the lives of all the people. Our messengers went to them with clear proofs and revelations, but most of them, after all this, are still transgressing.*

We are instructed in the Quran in explicit words that all acts of war must cease without delay if the enemies sue for peace, pledge to end all persecution and oppression and sincerely undertake to abide by their oaths and covenants. *[2:193] You may also fight them to eliminate oppression, and to worship GOD freely. If they refrain, you shall not aggress; aggression is permitted only against the aggressors. [8:39] You shall fight them to ward off oppression, and to practice your religion devoted to GOD alone. If they refrain from aggression, then GOD is fully Seer of everything they do. [8:61] If they resort to peace, so shall you, and put your trust in GOD. He is the Hearer, the Omniscient. [9:6] If one of the idol worshipers sought safe passage with you, you shall grant him safe passage, so that he can hear the word of GOD, then send him back to his place of security. That is because they are people who do not know.*

The issue of deterrence has also been discussed in the Quran. We are told that we must keep ourselves well prepared and avail ourselves of all sources of strength so that the enemy should, because of our preparedness, assume a peaceful attitude. *You Shall Be Prepared: A Divine Commandment [8:60] You shall prepare for them all the power you can muster, and all the equipment you can mobilize, that you may frighten the enemies of GOD, your enemies, as well as others who are not known to you; GOD knows them. Whatever you spend in the cause of GOD will be repaid to you generously, without the least injustice.* From this verse it is clearly mentioned that we should be ready for hostility not for the sake of starting it but to keep the enemy from disturbing the peace.

As for the propagation of faith is concerned, war has not been mentioned even once in the Quran. Otherwise, Sura 109 - The Disbelievers (Al Kaaferoon) would never have been revealed. The Holy Quran strictly prohibited conversion by force by stating in *No Compulsion in Religion [2:256] There shall be no compulsion in religion: the right way is now distinct from the wrong way. Anyone who denounces the devil and believes in*

GOD has grasped the strongest bond; one that never breaks. GOD is Hearer, Omniscient. These facts should be an eye opener for those not just for non Muslims but also certain jihadi and terrorist groups and the so called ulema who have inadequate acquaintance with the Quran and say that Islam requires its followers to fight for the spread of the word of God.

[42:39] When gross injustice befalls them, they stand up for their rights. [42:40] Although the just requital for an injustice is an equivalent retribution, those who pardon and maintain righteousness are rewarded by GOD. He does not love the unjust. [42:41] Certainly, those who stand up for their rights, when injustice befalls them, are not committing any error. [42:42] The wrong ones are those who treat the people unjustly, and resort to aggression without provocation. These have incurred a painful retribution. [42:43] Resorting to patience and forgiveness reflects a true strength of character.

Jihad can be exercised physically, through the use of wealth, speech, the pen, e-mail and even by immigration. It is obvious that its scope is very wide.

How to Spread God's Message [16:125] You shall invite to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kind enlightenment, and debate with them in the best possible manner. Your Lord knows best who has strayed from His path, and He knows best who are the guided ones.

Apathy Condemned [4:97] Those whose lives are terminated by the angels, while in a state of wronging their souls, the angels will ask them, "What was the matter with you?" They will say, "We were oppressed on earth." They will say, "Was GOD's earth not spacious enough for you to emigrate therein?" For these, the final abode is Hell, and a miserable destiny.

Oppression Condemned [2:217] They ask you about the Sacred Months and fighting therein: say, "Fighting therein is a sacrilege. However, repelling from the path of GOD and disbelieving in Him and in the sanctity of the Sacred Masjid, and evicting its people, are greater sacrileges in the sight of GOD. Oppression is worse than murder." They will always fight you to revert you from your religion, if they can. Those among you who revert from their religion, and die as disbelievers, have nullified their works in this life and the Hereafter. These are the dwellers of Hell, wherein they abide forever.

You may fight those who forcibly evict you from your hearth and home or your place of abode. You can drive them out if they want to drive you out. This is the only way to preserve individual and collective freedom. So war can be used against oppression, as it is worse than murder. While it is generally accepted that killing is evil, yet it is enjoined to crush a greater evil. The important thing to note is that these are God's commands and there is no room to find excuses to suit one's own wishes and convenience. A sign of the eradication of oppression would be that all worship is to God alone. There can be no compromise to finish this battle half way. Any oppression has to be removed in such a way that the rules of God can be seen to be applied everywhere. *[22:41] They are those*

who, if we appointed them as rulers on earth, they would establish the Contact Prayers (Salat) and the obligatory charity (Zakat), and would advocate righteousness and forbid evil. GOD is the ultimate ruler.

As for the recompense, there are rewards for all forms of worship and good deeds. But the reward for those who sacrifice their life in the cause of God – martyrdom is the ultimate as they get an exalted eternal life.

Where Do We Go From Here? [2:154] Do not say of those who are killed in the cause of GOD, "They are dead." They are alive at their Lord, but you do not perceive. The Righteous Do Not Really Die [3:169] Do not think that those who are killed in the cause of GOD are dead; they are alive at their Lord, enjoying His provisions. With their Nourisher they have their nourishment. God stresses in both these verses that those slain in the cause of God are not dead but living with their Lord, which is a magnificent reward.

The Quran is a scripture, which must be read in text and context. [73:4] ... *And read the Quran from cover to cover.* We cannot just take out one verse without considering the others, and extract a certain meaning, disregarding all the other thousands of verses that provide perfect balance in the message. [3:7] *He sent down to you this scripture, containing straightforward verses - which constitute the essence of the scripture - as well as multiple-meaning or allegorical verses. Those who harbor doubts in their hearts will pursue the multiple-meaning verses to create confusion, and to extricate a certain meaning. None knows the true meaning thereof except GOD and those well founded in knowledge. They say, "We believe in this - all of it comes from our Lord." Only those who possess intelligence will take heed.*

The simple and obvious message for the Muslims is to unite and strive for their rights and freedom. It is to their advantage that it is enjoined upon them by God to pursue the cause of their freedom, which He calls His own cause. For those who believe in the Hereafter, no cost is too high to follow the command of God to fight against oppression. History will bear witness that God has favoured the Muslims with success as long as they worshipped God alone and contended against oppression with utmost sincerity of intention.

[29:6] Those who strive, strive for their own good. GOD is in no need of anyone.

GOD BE GLORIFIED !