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Jihad

12. What purpose does Islam seek to achieve by Jihad? What is the need for the 'Initiating Jihad'?

The Islamic Jihad can be classified into three categories.

The 'Initiating' and 'Liberating' Jihad

Allah has prescribed a set of orders and chalked out programmes for the development, freedom, comfort, happiness and prosperity of man, and has entrusted unto His prophets the responsibility of communicating these to the people. Now, if an individual or a group of individuals regard the communication of these orders detrimental to their personal lowly interests and endeavour to obstruct the prophets in fulfilling their divine responsibilities, the prophets possess the right to remove the obstructions lying in their path, initially by utilizing peaceful means and if not possible, then by use of force, in order to acquire for themselves the freedom to propagate (the commandments of Allah).

In other words, in every society, people have the right to listen to those who invite them towards the path of Truth, and possess freedom to accept their invitation. But if some individuals deprive them of their legitimate right and inhibit them from hearing the truth and becoming freed from their mental and social captivity and slavery, the followers of these divine programmes possess the right to utilize every means at their disposal in order to achieve this freedom. It is here that the necessity of the Initiating Jihad in Islam and other divine religions becomes manifest.

Similarly, if some individuals were to compel the believers to revert to their original religion, every means could be employed for repelling such compulsions too.

The 'Defensive' Jihad

At times it so happens that a battle is imposed upon an individual or a group such that they find themselves as the object of a calculated and/or a surprise attack. In such an instance, all divine and

man-made laws permit the persons attacked to defend themselves and employ every available means to protect themselves. This kind of Jihad is referred to as the defensive Jihad; the battles of Ahzab, Uhud, Mubah, Tabuk, Hunain and some other Islamic battles are examples of this category of Jihad which were defensive in nature.

Jihad for the ‘Eradication of Polytheism and Idolatry’

Although Islam invites the people to select this religion – the last and the most exalted of all religions – nonetheless, it also respects the freedom of belief and it is for this reason that it grants the communities, which possess divine books, sufficient opportunity so that, after study and reflection, they may accept the religion of Islam. But if they do not do so it looks upon them as a confederate and by placing some specific conditions, which are neither intricate nor difficult, endeavours to have a peaceful co-existence with them.

However, the issue of polytheism is different since it is neither a religion nor a doctrine and so it cannot be looked upon with respect and esteem – rather, it is a kind of superstition, deviation and foolishness. In reality, it is a kind of mental and moral sickness, which ought to be uprooted.

The use of the terms 'freedom' and 'respect', in connection with the views of others, is applicable if the views or the beliefs are at least based upon a foundation. However, deviation, superstition and sickness are not something that can be treated as respectable, and it is due to this that Islam has ordered idolatry to be uprooted from the human society, even at the cost of warfare; if idol temples and their evil influences cannot be brought down and destroyed by peaceful means, then they should be uprooted by means of force. 1

From what has been mentioned above, the answer to the venomous propaganda of the Church becomes plainly evident since a sentence more explicit than:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ

“There is no compulsion in (acceptance) of the religion.”

which appears in the Qur`an, cannot be found in this regard.

Of course, for the purpose of distortion, these people focus their attention upon the battles of Islam; however, a study of these battles clearly reveal that while some of these were purely defensive in nature, others – that belonged to the category of initiating Jihad – were not initiated with the objective of conquering lands and forcing the people into the religion of Islam but instead, for overturning incorrect and oppressive regimes, and providing opportunity to the people to freely study and review the religion and modes of social lifestyle.

Islamic history is a living testimony to the above, since it has been observed repeatedly that when the Muslims conquered cities they would grant freedom to the followers of other religions (just as they would do to the Muslims) and these people even performed their acts of worship and observed their religious ceremonies unhindered. If a limited tax, by the name of Jizyah, was taken from them, it was for the purpose of providing social security and covering the expenses of the security forces, since their lives, properties and womenfolk were under the protection of Islam.

Those people who deal with the history of Islam, are aware of this reality and even the Christians, who have written books on Islam, have acknowledged this issue. For example, in the book *La Civilisation des Arabes* we read: “The Muslims were so lenient towards the other communities that the religious leaders of these communities had the permission to organize their own religious gatherings.”

In some historical accounts it has been reported that a group of Christians, who had arrived in the presence of the Noble Prophet for the purpose of research and investigation, performed their religious ceremonies in the Mosque of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) in the city of Madinah – freely and unchecked!2

13. How does Islam attest slavery?

Some people criticize Islam as to why this divine religion, with all its distinguished human values, did not abrogate slavery in its entirety and announce the freedom of all slaves by means of one decisive and general decree.

It is true that Islam has made numerous recommendations with respect to slaves, but what is of prime importance is their unconditional liberty and freedom. Why should a human be owned by another human and lose his freedom – the greatest divine gift?

In one short sentence it can be said that Islam has chalked out an accurate schedule for the freedom of slaves such that eventually not only would all of them gradually become free, but at the same time, this would take place without causing any adverse reaction within the society. In one short sentence it can be said that Islam has chalked out an accurate schedule for the freedom of slaves such that eventually not only would all of them gradually become free, but at the same time, this would take place without causing any adverse reaction within the society.

Islam’s Strategy for Liberating Slaves

Something that is not usually taken into account is that if an erroneous system penetrates into a society, it takes time to uproot it, and any uncalculated step would only yield an opposite result. This is similar to a person, who is afflicted with a dangerous disease which has reached a very advanced stage of its existence, or an addict, who has been addicted to drugs for decades; in such cases, it is imperative to employ phased and scheduled programs.

Speaking more plainly, if Islam, by means of one general order, had ordered the people to free all the

slaves in one stroke, it was possible that most of the slaves might have possibly perished since, at times, they constituted nearly half of the population of the society. Coupled with this was the fact that, they had no source of income, no independent work, no dwelling and no means to lead their lives.

If all the slaves were to have become free on one day and at one particular hour, a huge unemployed group would have suddenly manifested itself within the society such that not only would it have placed itself in difficulty and endangered its own existence, but would have also thrown the entire discipline and order of the society into disarray. This is because when they experienced the pressures of deprivation, they would have had to resort to violence and aggression, and this would have led to dissension, skirmishes and bloodshed.

Therefore, it was vital that they became free and got absorbed into the society, gradually, so that neither did their own lives fall into peril nor did they threaten the peace and security of the society – and it was this calculated strategy that Islam pursued.

There are several parts to this strategy and the most important points from each of them shall be listed here, although briefly, since a detailed explanation demands that a separate and independent book is written for the purpose.

The First Part: Eliminating the Sources of Slavery

Throughout the ages, there have been numerous factors and causes of slavery. Debtors who were unable to pay off their debts, and prisoners of war, landed up as slaves. Power and strength provided a license for procuring slaves. Powerful nations would send their forces armed with various weapons to the backward nations of the African continent and other such regions, subjugate their inhabitants into captivity, transferring them in groups, by means of ships, to the markets of Asian and European countries.

Islam put its foot down upon these means and approved only one instance for slavery – prisoners of war. In addition, even this was not obligatory; it granted permission that, in accordance with the general welfare and expediencies they could be set free, either unconditionally or after payment of ransom.

In those days there were no prisons in which the prisoners of war could be held till their affairs were sorted out and hence, there lay no alternative except to retain them, by distributing them amongst the families as slaves.

It is self-evident that when these circumstances change, there exists no reason for the leader of the Muslims to adhere to the ruling of slavery in connection with the prisoners of war; rather, he is at liberty to set them free by way of favour or ransom. In this regard, Islam has authorized the leader of the Muslims to take into consideration the general welfare and all-round interests and then choose the course of action necessary. In this manner, the causes leading to further slavery were almost completely eliminated.

The Second Part: Opening the Door Towards freedom

Islam has chalked out an elaborate program for the freedom of slaves, and had the Muslims acted upon it, it would not have been very long before all the slaves had become free and absorbed within the Islamic society.

The main points of this program

1. One of the eight instances in which zakat can be expended in Islam is purchasing slaves and setting them free.³ In this manner, a perpetual and continuous budget from the Public Treasury has been allocated for this purpose and which shall continue till the complete freedom of all slaves is achieved.
2. In pursuance of the objective, provisions exist in Islam which permit the slaves to enter into an agreement with their masters and purchase their freedom by paying them from the wages which they earn (in Islamic jurisprudence, an entire chapter titled Mukatabah, has been devoted to this issue).⁴
3. Freeing slaves is regarded as one of the most important acts of worship in Islam and the Infallibles (a.s) always led the way in this issue, to the extent that in connection with Imam 'Ali (a.s) it has been recorded that:

أَعْتَقَ أَلْفًا مِنْ كَدِّ يَدِهِ.

“He freed a thousand slaves by means of his wages (which he used to earn).”⁵

4. The Infallibles G used to free slaves at the slightest of excuses so that it serves as an example for the others, to the extent that when one of the slaves of Imam Baqir (a.s) performed a good deed, the Imam (a.s) said:

فَاذْهَبْ فَأَنْتَ حُرٌّ فَإِنِّي أَكْرَهُ أَنْ أَسْتَعْدِمَ رَجُلًا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ.

“Go, you are now free for I do not approve of a person from the inmates of Paradise to be my slave (and serve me).”⁶

It has been narrated in connection with Imam Sajjad (a.s) that once, his servant was in the process of pouring water over his (a.s) head when the vessel slipped from his hand and injured the Imam (a.s). The Imam (a.s) looked up at the servant whereupon, the servant recited:

وَ الْكَاطِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ

“...and those who restrain (their) anger.”⁷

Hearing this, the Imam (a.s) said: I have restrained my anger. The servant recited further:

وَ الْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ

“...and pardon other people.”

The Imam (a.s) said: May Allah forgive you. The servant continued:

وَ اللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“...and Allah loves the doers of good (to others)”

whereupon the Imam (a.s) said: 'Go. For the sake of Allah, you are (now) free.'⁸

5. In some of the traditions it has been stated that the slaves, after a period of seven years, would become free automatically, as we read in a tradition that Imam as-sadiq (a.s) said: One, who is a believer, becomes free after seven years – irrespective of whether his master approves of it or not. It is not permissible to extract services from a slave, who is a believer, after seven years.⁹

In this very chapter there is a tradition from the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) wherein he (s.a.w) says:

مَا زَالَ جِبْرَائِيلُ يُوصِينِي بِالْمَمْلُوكِ حَتَّى ظَنَنْتُ أَنَّهُ سَيَضْرِبُ لِي أَجَلًا يُعْتَقُ فِيهِ.

“Jibra`il used to make recommendations to me, with respect to the slaves, so often that I was given to suppose that he would shortly stipulate a time-period after which they would (automatically) become free.”¹⁰

6. If a person, who owns a slave in partnership, liberates him in the ratio of his share in the partnership, he is obliged to purchase the remaining part of the slave and liberate him fully.¹¹

Moreover, if a person who owns a slave fully, frees a portion of the ownership, this freedom permeates into the other portions too and the slave becomes completely free, automatically!¹²

7. Whenever one becomes the owner of one's father, mother, grand-fathers, sons, paternal and maternal uncles and aunts, brothers, sisters or nephews, they immediately (and automatically) become free.
8. If a master fathers a child by way of his slave-girl, it is not permissible for him to sell her and she must be later set free by utilizing the son's share of the inheritance.
This issue became a cause for the freedom of a great number of slave-girls, since many of the slave-girls were like wives for their masters and had children from them.
9. In Islam, expiation of many of the sins has been stipulated by freeing slaves (expiation for unintentional murder, intentional abandonment of fasts, and for (breaking an) oath are some examples of this).
10. Some exceptionally harsh punishments have been singled out (by Islam) whereby if a master were to subject his slave to any of these, the slave would automatically become free.¹³¹⁴

14. What is Jizyah and What is its Philosophy?

Jizyah is derived from **جَزَاء** and refers to the money taken from the non-Muslims, who are under the protection of the Islamic government. It has been named so because it is paid by the non-Muslims to the Islamic government as recompense for the protection granted to them with respect to their lives and properties (as stated by Raghīb, in his book *al-Mufradat*).

It is a kind of an Islamic poll tax that is associated with individuals – not land or wealth; in other words, it is a yearly computation.

Some people are of the opinion that its root is of non-Arabic origin and has been derived from the ancient Persian word **کزیت**, which means tax taken to strengthen the army. However, numerous others believe that this word is totally Arabic of origin and, as we have previously mentioned, taken from **جزاء**, in view of the fact that the tax was a compensation for the security provided by the Islamic government to the religious minorities.

Jizyah also existed prior to Islam and it is the view of some people that the first person to levy it was Anushirwan, the Sassanide king. But even if we do not consider this to be the case, he was certainly one who did levy this tax upon his people. He would take varying amounts of 4, 6, 8, or 12 dirhams as a yearly tax from all individuals who were between the ages of 20 and 50, except the functionaries of the government.

The main philosophy behind this tax has been explained as follows: Defending the existence, independence and security of a nation is the responsibility of all the individuals of that nation. Now, if one group comes forward to practically shoulder this responsibility (in the form of soldiers), whilst another group, due to its involvement in work and trade, is unable to stand alongside the soldiers, then, it is the

responsibility of this second group to pay for the expenses of the soldiers and security forces in the form of a per capita tax, in the year.

We have evidence which attest this philosophy to be true in the case of Jizyah – be it before the arrival of Islam or after.

The age–group of those who had to pay Jizyah during the rule of Anushirwan – as has been previously stated by us (between 20 and 50 years) – is an articulate testimony in this regard, since people in this age–group possess the strength and ability to carry weapons, and to help out in maintaining the independence and security of a nation. But being engaged in work and trade, they used to pay the Jizyah instead.

Another testimony in this regard is the fact that in Islam, it is not necessary for the Muslims to pay Jizyah. This is because Jihad is obligatory upon everyone and when the occasion demands, everyone must step out into the battle–field to stand up against the enemy. Since the religious minorities are exempted from Jihad, they must pay Jizyah in order that, in this way, they (too) have a part in safeguarding the security of the Islamic nation in which they lead a life of peace and tranquillity.

In addition to this, the exemption of ladies, children, the old and the blind of the religious minorities from paying Jizyah is yet another proof in this regard.

From what has been mentioned, it becomes plain that Jizyah is just a kind of monetary assistance paid by the People of the Book vis–à–vis responsibility, which the Muslims have shouldered with respect to safeguarding their lives and possessions.

Thus those people who have regarded Jizyah as a kind of 'subjugation of rights', have not taken into consideration the spirit and the idea that lie behind it. They are oblivious of the fact that when the Ahlul Kitab (People of the Book) enter into the category of Ahlul Dhimmah (protected people), the Islamic leadership is obliged to grant them protection from every kind of aggression and harassment.

Bearing in mind that against the payment of Jizyah, in addition to availing protection and security benefits, they do not possess any other obligation such as participation in battles or involvement in other defensive and security affairs, it is obvious that their responsibility towards the Islamic government is much lighter than that of the Muslims.

It follows that by paying a meagre annual amount, they avail themselves of all the benefits of the Islamic government as do the Muslims while, at the same time, they are not exposed to any danger.

This philosophy can be corroborated by examining the covenants established during the period of the Islamic government between the Muslims and the People of the Book in connection with Jizyah, in which it has been expressly stated that the People of the Book were obliged to pay the Jizyah and in return, the Muslims were obliged to guarantee their safety, to the extent that even if some enemy happened to

attack them, the Islamic government would be duty-bound to defend them!

These covenants are numerous in number and, as an example, we present below the covenant, which was entered into between Khalid b. Walid and the Christians living around the Euphrates. The text of the covenant is as follows: “This is a letter from Khalid b. Walid to Saluba¹⁵ and his companions. I hereby enter into a covenant of Jizyah and defence with you, and in exchange for it you shall avail of the benefit of our support. As long as we continue to support and defend you, we shall possess the right to take Jizyah from you and if not, then we shall have no right to take it. This covenant has been written in the month of Safar, twelve years after the migration (Hijri).”¹⁶

Interestingly, we observe that whenever there was a failure or neglect in supporting or defending them, the Muslims would either return the Jizyah to them or not collect it from them at all!

It is also necessary to note that the measure of Jizyah is not fixed and defined – rather, it depends upon the ability of those paying it. However, Islamic history reveals that a small amount would usually be specified, and at times this would not exceed one dinar a year. Occasionally the covenant even contained the condition that those paying the Jizyah were obliged to pay it in the measure of their means and ability.

The above discussion serves to clear the various objections and caustic criticisms levelled at this Islamic ruling, and establish that this is a ruling that is both just and logical.¹⁷

15. What is the Philosophy behind the Prohibition of Battles in the Holy Months?

In verse 36 of Suratul Taubah, we read:

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرْمٌ

“Surely the number of months with Allah is twelve months in Allah's ordinance since the day when He created the heavens and the earth, of these four being sacred.”

The question that is propounded here is: Why are Muslims prohibited to wage battles in the four months (Dhul Qa'dah, Dhul Hijjah, MuHarram and Rajab)?

Prohibition of battles in these four months is one of the ways to bring to conclusion long-drawn and protracted battles, and a means of invitation towards peace and reconciliation. With the laying down of arms, the dying down of the sound of clashing of swords and whistling of arrows, and the presence of an

opportunity for thought and reflection, there is a strong possibility that the battles may come to an end.

There is a vast difference between a persistent and continued confrontation and a renewed start following a lull – the latter being much more difficult and severe. We cannot forget how difficult it had been during the Vietnam War, to bring about a ceasefire for a period of 24 hours for the start of the Christian New Year – or in other similar instances.

On the other hand, Islam has announced for its followers a ceasefire of four months in every year, and this itself is an indication of its peace-loving nature. But as we previously mentioned, if the enemy desires to misuse this Islamic ruling and trample the sanctity of these holy months, the Muslims have been granted permission to retaliate in a likewise manner. 18

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1. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 2, pg. 15
 2. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 2, pg. 205
 3. Suratul Taubah (9), Verse 60
 4. The issue of mukatabah and the interesting rulings associated with it has been discussed at great length in Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 14, pg. 459 & 467.
 5. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 41, pg. 43
 6. Wasa'il ash-Shia, vol. 16, pg. 32
 7. Surat Ale 'Imran (3), Verse 134 (Tr.)
 8. Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalain, vol. 1, pg. 390
 9. Wasa'il ash-Shia, vol. 16, pg. 36
 10. Wasa'il ash-Shia, vol. 17, pg. 37
 11. Shara'i' al-Islam, (The book of freedom (of a slave)); Wasa'il ash-Shia, vol. 16, pg. 21
 12. Shara'i' al-Islam, (The book of freedom (of a slave))
 13. Wasa'il ash-Shia, vol. 16, pg. 26
 14. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 21, pg. 413
 15. The leader of the Christian group.
 16. Quoted from Tafsir al-Manar, vol. 10, pg. 294
 17. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 7, pg. 354
 18. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 7, pg. 408

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