

Fast 28: Jihād — at Madinah

- After the Muslims reached Madinah, a struggle for national existence was forced on them, and they had to take up the fight in self-defence. This struggle also went, and rightly so, under the name of *jihād*; but even in the Madinah chapters the word is used in the wider sense of a struggle carried on by words or deeds of any kind. The following verse may be quoted which occurs twice:

“O Prophet, Strive hard (*jāhid*) against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be firm against them.” (9:73, see also 66:9)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ

Here the Holy Prophet is commanded to carry on a *jihād* against both unbelievers and hypocrites. The hypocrites were those who were outwardly Muslims and lived among, and were treated like, Muslims in all respects. They came to the mosque and prayed with the Muslims. They even paid the *zakāt*. A war against them was unthinkable, and none was ever undertaken. On the other hand, they sometimes fought along with the Muslims against the unbelievers. Therefore the injunction to carry on a *jihād* against both unbelievers and hypocrites could not mean the waging of war against them. It was a *jihād* carried on by means of the Quran as expressly stated in 25:52, a striving hard to win them over to Islam.

- In fact, the word is almost always used in the general sense of striving hard, including fighting where the context so requires. The Quran contains following description in a revelation at Madinah:

“Those who believe and those who fled (their homes) and strove hard (*jāhadū*) in Allah’s way” (2:218, see also 8:74, 9:20).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

This applied as much to the fighters as to those who carried on the struggle against unbelief and evil in other ways.

- In a chapter revealed at Madinah, Muslims are told:

“You should believe in Allah and His Messenger, **and strive hard in Allah’s way** with your wealth and your lives. That is better for you, if you but knew!” (61:11)

تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

Three verses later it is stated how that striving is to be done:

“O you who believe, be helpers (in the cause) of Allah, as Jesus, son of Mary, said to the disciples: Who are my helpers in the cause of Allah? The disciples said: We are helpers (in the cause) of Allah.” (61:14)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ كَمَا
قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِحَوَارِيِّينَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي
إِلَى اللَّهِ ط قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ

The striving hard, or *jihād*, of verse 11 is explained in verse 14 as making yourselves helpers in the cause of Allah **as the disciples of Jesus responded to his call** to be helpers in the Divine cause. The disciples of Jesus were not asked to fight in any battle with weapons. They helped the cause of truth by propagating his message in the face of persecution and the utmost difficulties. Muslims are here told to follow their example.

- In Hadith too, the word *jihād* is used not only for fighting (which is limited to self-defence) but for other kinds of striving as well. It is reported:

“A man came to the Prophet and asked his permission for *jihād*. He asked: Are your parents alive? The man said, Yes. He said: Then do *jihād* in their way.”
(Bukhari, book: *Jihād*, ch. 138)

The words “do *jihād* in their way” can only mean, and are understood by everyone as meaning, “exert yourself in the service of your parents”.

- The Holy Prophet’s wife Aishah asked him: “We consider *jihād* (of fighting) to be the most excellent of all deeds. Should we not then engage in *jihād*?” He replied: “No, the most excellent *jihād* is the properly-performed Pilgrimage (*ḥajj mabrūr*).”
(Bukhari, book: Pilgrimage, ch. 4)
- A man asked the Prophet: “Which *jihād* is the most excellent?” He replied: “It is to say a word of truth before an unjust ruler.” (Ibn Majah, Tirmidhi, Nasa’i)
- Some decades after the death of the Holy Prophet, during a time of warfare between two factions of Muslims, Abdullah ibn Umar, the son of Hazrat Umar, was asked by some people of the one side why he refused to fight *jihād* against the other faction. They said to him: “You know how much God has encouraged *jihād*.” He replied:

“Islam is based on five things: Belief in God and His messenger, five prayers, fasting in Ramadan, giving *zakāt*, and the Pilgrimage to the House of God.”

He thus told them that the *jihād* of fighting is **not** included in the five pillars of Islam.