

Fast 26: Jihad (2)

- As to what is the jihad required of a Muslim, this is mentioned in the Quran in revelations that came when the Holy Prophet Muhammad was still living at Makkah before his emigration (*hijra*). At that time, the Quran had not mentioned the necessity by Muslims to fight any battles, nor could Muslims even imagine raising an army to fight. We refer first to the following two verses:

“And strive hard (*jāhidū*) for Allah with due striving (*jihād*). ...” (22:78)

وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ ط

“So do not obey the disbelievers, and strive (*jāhid*) against them a mighty striving (*jihād*) with it.” (25:52)

فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَجَاهِدْهُمْ بِهِ جِهَادًا

كَبِيرًا ﴿٥٢﴾

The first quote above contains the word *jihād* (جهاد) twice, and it mentions “due striving” or *jihād* as it ought to be done (*ḥaqqā jihād*), the real and true jihad. The only jihad it is referring to is the spiritual struggle to attain nearness to God and undergoing great hardship to adhere to Islam while being persecuted by its opponents. In the second verse, the words “with it” mean “by means of the Quran”. This also contains the word *jihad* twice, and speaks of a **great** jihad. This great jihad is the struggle to win over the unbelievers, not by means of force but with the truth and arguments brought by the Quran. In the terminology of the Quran, the jihad described in these verses is **the true and the great jihad**, and this is the permanent jihad.

- The word jihad as applied to a battle or war is only a secondary meaning. Such a conflict is **not necessarily jihad** as recognized by Islam; that depends on the circumstances of the conflict. However, the spiritual struggle and the effort to present the message of the Quran, mentioned in the last paragraph, are always and unconditionally the forms of jihad required by Islam.
- Two other verses revealed during the Makkah period support the same meaning:

“And whoever strives hard (*jāhada*), strives (*yujāhidu*) for himself (i.e., for his own benefit). Surely Allah is above need of His creatures.” (29:6)

وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ

لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦﴾

“And those who strive hard (*jāhadū*) for Us, We shall certainly guide them in Our ways. And Allah is surely with the doers of good.” (29:69)

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ

سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

Again, the first verse uses the word *jihad* twice. It refers to a person who is striving, or conducting a jihad, to improve himself or his own soul. It says that it is not Allah Who benefits from that person’s striving but the person himself. In the second verse, in the same chapter 29, Allah tells us that the result of this jihad “for Us”, i.e., to attain nearness to Allah, is that Allah guides that person in the ways which bring him further closer to Him. There is absolutely no connection here with any battle or war. In fact, the act required for this jihad is to be a doer of good to others (*muhsin*, محسن).

- A further instance in which, before the Quran ever mentioned Muslims as having to fight battles, it mentioned their jihad, is as follows:

“Then surely your Lord, to those who flee after they are persecuted, then struggle hard (*jāhadū*) and are patient, surely your Lord after that is Protecting, Merciful.” (16:110)

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا مِنَّا
فَتَنُوا ثَمَّ جَهْدُوا وَصَبَرُوا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ
بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

This is the **jihad of bearing difficulties patiently** in the face of persecution for their faith and the hardship of the consequent flight and migration from Makkah. It is wrongly thought that patience and doing jihad are opposite things because patience consists of showing restraint, while jihad is to take some positive action. And there is a misconception that at Makkah, before the Holy Prophet’s move to Madinah, the Quran taught Muslims only to show patience (*ṣabr*) but at Madinah it changed this teaching and required them to do jihad, meaning fighting. This view is wrong because the verse above says: “those who do jihad **and** are patient”. Also, as the verse was revealed at Makkah, even the doing of jihad **after** fleeing could not mean fighting.

- After Muslims migrated to Madinah, and then their enemies from Makkah launched three battles against them, one after another, it became a jihad for Muslims to fight in self-defence. But even then, the word jihad was still also used in its general sense.

“A man came to the Prophet and asked his permission for jihad. He asked: Are your parents alive? The man said: Yes. He said: Then do jihad in their way.” (Bukhari, book: Jihad, hadith number 3004)

جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ فَاسْتَأْذَنَهُ فِي الْجِهَادِ فَقَالَ أَحْيَى
وَالِدَاكَ. قَالَ نَعَمْ. قَالَ فَفِيهِمَا فَجَاهِدْ

The words “do jihad in their way” can only mean, and are understood by everyone as meaning, “exert yourself in the service of your parents”. This man wanted to enlist to fight in a battle as jihad, but the Holy Prophet told him to stay at home as his jihad was to look after his parents.