

# Islam is not the Religion of Sword<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Haj Noor Ali Tabandeh

Islam is a religion that has always been under suspicion and accusation of many orientalist and researchers. One of these accusations is that they say: Islam is the religion of sword and recently, by posing new terms, it is called that Islam is the religion of terrorism and violence. Even in recent years, they generated the term of Islamophobia related to this content. Of course, the record of this accusation returns back to medieval and conquests of Muslims in Andalusia and after then conquests of Ottoman Turkish. But, in that ages this subject was not so critical as is nowadays. These misgivings are raised in new ages and due to the necessities of new world situation. It is obvious that we, who are proud of carrying the title of Muslim as a main part of our identity, are responsible to defend our spirituality that is Islam.

Firstly, it should be asked that what is the basis of Islam and why was the Prophet sent? It has been narrated that the Prophet said that: I was sent to promote ethical generosities to transcendent and perfection.<sup>2</sup> The Prophet does not say that I was sent and missioned to conquer the world by sword and war. Indeed, the basis of Islam is to complete ethical generosities and no more. God wants to complete ethical generosities by His Highness the Prophet. Now, could we say that: is terrorism or war ethical generosities? It is obvious that any sound mind negates it. Quran's verse and history of Islam express thoroughly that war is not included as the basis of Islam; but, it could be said that it was due to the necessities to establish Medina and government to protect it. So, if the Prophet said that "I am the Prophet of sword"<sup>3</sup> but God said about the Prophet that "**We did not send you but to be the grace of the two worlds**"<sup>4</sup>. So the Prophet's sword is followed by his mercy and due to it; therefore the basis was His mercy and if he took sword it was because of his mercy. To clarify this subject I say an example: in medical science, most of diseases are cured by drugs, but in some special cases, surgery is needed. Therefore, the basis of the medical science is not surgery but is to redress and cure, but sometimes surgery is necessary.

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper has been written based on His Excellency Dr. Haj Noor Ali Tabandeh's speech in 29 August 2003. Due to some publicized wrong expositions about Islam, and even the pope (leader of world Catholics) cited, we published His speech in this volume of *Erfan Iran* magazine (No. 29 and 30). Edited by Dr. Seyyed Mostafa Azmayesh. Haqiqat Publications, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>2</sup> Alas! There have not been written many explanations about this narration of the Prophet that is about the main foundation of Islam – even it is the origin of the origin of Islam as Molana says. But it is astonishing that how many books have been written and published about the topics that are the minor of the minor of Islam.

<sup>3</sup> انا نبي السيف

<sup>4</sup> Surah: Al-Anbiya, Verse 107: "مَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ"

Molavi the compassionate, at the end of the first book of Mathnavi<sup>5</sup> indicates that if the Prophet was to conquer Mecca, it was not because of worldliness; since, his idea about material world was that: “**the material world is a cadaver and its appetent are dogs**”.<sup>6</sup>

Now, to those who misgive Islam, it should be said why don't they look at other verses of Quran? God says: “**Let there be no compulsion in religion: truth stands out clear from error**”.<sup>7</sup> And says: “**To you be your way, and to me mine**”<sup>8</sup> These verses clearly shows that Islam invites people to peaceful coexistence. Especially, if we consider that “**Let there be no compulsion in religion**” (in ayat-ul-korsi) was descend in Medina, while the Prophet had governmental power. Furthermore, if we consider the dignity of descent verses that are about war we understand that all of them emphasize on defense. In the history of Islam, we see that Muslims were very harassed when they were in Mecca. So, they asked the Prophet to let them to revolt but, His Excellency even didn't let them to defend. This was the case that honorable male and female Muslims such as Sohayb, Bilal, Somayyah (Amar bin Yasir's mother) were injured or killed under the torment of Mecca pagans. As soon as *Jihad* (holy war) was not commanded in Mecca, but legislated in Medina, it shows that war is not the basis of Islam, since the Prophet could issue *jihad's* commandment in Mecca better than any others could. If war was the basis of Islam then, from the beginning during thirteen years when the Prophet was in Mecca the jihad's commandment should be issued. While Islam began with monotheism that is confession of “**No God except Allah is my fortress**”<sup>9</sup> “or “**say there is no God but Allah**”<sup>10</sup> not with call for battle, as praying was legislated in Mecca from the beginning of Islam. But, the commandments such as zakat<sup>11</sup> were not legislated in Mecca since there was no government so there was no need to it.

After legislation of *jihad's* commandment, the first war by Muslims was Badr war. It is said in the history of Islam that since the polytheists despoiled Muslim's properties, Muslims believed that they had right to plunder their properties so they prepared armed forces. It's written in verses of Quran that some Muslims wanted to attack to an unprotected convoy and plunder their

<sup>5</sup> Mathnavi Manavi, poems:3986-3963:

The struggle of the Prophet to conquer the Mecca  
Were never for worldly interest

Who from the treasury of seven heavens  
Turned His eyes and heart at the day of temptation  
\*\*\*

What negligible the Mecca and Sham and Iraq are  
That He fight for them and be interested in

Whoever accuse Him to this bad temptation  
Is because of his ignorance and greed comparison

<sup>6</sup> الدنيا جيفة و طالبها كلاب

<sup>7</sup> Surah of Bagharah, Verse 256. لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ

<sup>8</sup> Surah: Kafaroon, Verse: 6. لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

<sup>9</sup> كَلِمَةً لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ حِصْنِي

<sup>10</sup> قُولُوا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ تَفْلِحُوا

<sup>11</sup> Poor due or alms as prescribed by Islam.

properties. But, according to God command they attacked to the convoy who did not have properties and was armed. Do not these examples show that these wars were not because of pugnacity but just for defense?

To answer to the doubt raised by orientalist that Muslims were fighting to take war trophies it should be said that it is true that at the beginning of Islam sometimes some Muslims did this, but the truth and spirit of Islam is different from what some impure Muslims believed and did due to it.<sup>12</sup> Besides at the beginning of Islam these probably plunder-seeking Muslims, there were other Muslims who had complete purity and goodwill. The material world's wares were not important for them. They were very eager to fight the pagans and enemies of Islam as if they couldn't go to war because of not having steed or weapon so the prophet couldn't accompanying them to go war, they came back while crying. Did they cry because of war trophy? If the Prophet based his activity on war, he should behave and plan in a way that more people could participate in war.

Of course, there is no doubt that afterwards many governors by the name of Islam and sometimes under the title of *jihad* campaigned, killed people, and pillaged. They did violence and now they do so. But these are exceptions and are more politically than religiously. The role of Islam is prophecy mercy of and invite to "*Salam*". But, if we want to see these exceptions (that are in most religions) as a rule as orientalist imputed to Islam, in Christianity the crusades of middle ages could be problematic, and actually are in contrary to the rule of mercy and kindness in Christianity<sup>13</sup>, that is based on this command of Jesus (AS) who said: if a person slapped one side of your face, bring your other side of your face; and if he takes your robe give your garment as well.<sup>14</sup>

It should be accepted that Islam is the religion of peace and mercy, not fight and battle. Islam comes from the root of the word of "*Selm*" philologically. This word means calmness, security and peace. Muslims say "*Salam*" (hello) to show respect to each other. And according to the Prophet speech: a Muslim is a person who other Muslims are secured from his/her tongue and hand<sup>15</sup> and "*Salam*" is one of the holy names of Allah. God invites everybody to *Daro-salam* (House of *Salam*)<sup>16</sup> that means the place of secure and friendship.

---

<sup>12</sup> Such this inopportune obstructs and cavils are liked criticisms about true Islamic mysticism and Sufism. For example, a person makes a mistake as a dervish in one part of the world, and in another part, it is said that all dervishes are like the same. If this incorrect saying were true, so it holds true about every offender followers of all religions.

<sup>13</sup> Apparently, the factors of beginning crusade by Pope Urban the II as religious *jihad*, were Jesus invitation to *jihad* and giving property and life in his way. The famous Christianity basic rule is invitation to kindness. But, as it is written in Gospel of Matthew, 10:34-39, Jesus commands: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth, I have not come to bring peace but sword". What is understood from His statements in this part of Bible and its context is that life and property should be given for Jesus. This order is like the one in Quran that commands: "**Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the garden (of paradise)**". Surah: Tobah, Verse 111.

<sup>14</sup> Gospel of Luke, 5: 27-35.

<sup>15</sup> الْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ يَدِهِ وَ لِسَانِهِ

<sup>16</sup> Surah: Jonah, Verse 25 .**But Allah doth call to the home of peace.** وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى دَارِ السَّلَامِ.

The basis of Islam is this, but when the Prophet and Muslims migrated to Medina and established the Islamic government, the new situation appeared, because by increasing number of Muslims and also the Islamic society were faced with many different estates and morals and material needs. Furthermore, their transactions and communications with themselves and other non-Muslims were increased and more complex. So, some commandments should be legislated for some affairs such as marriage, business, trade, usury and also commandments such as *jihad* and retaliation to protect newly established Islamic society against the enemies to be executed in the society and everybody ought to obey them; in order to put their material living in a healthy and balanced way. Moreover, execution of these regulations creates the background to complete ethical palmer.

Principally, as the Prophet himself commanded the *jihad* (holy war) was the minor *jihad* that is fighting with external enemies of Islam. Higher *jihad* that is greater *jihad*, is the main element of Islam. As from the beginning of Islam the Prophet wanted Muslims to do this. Since greater *jihad* means *jihad* (fighting) with imperious self is the main necessities to ethical palmer.<sup>17</sup> If minor *jihad* was sufficiently- obligatory<sup>18</sup>, but the greater *jihad* was objectively-obligatory<sup>19</sup>. It means that it was obligatory for every male and female Muslim to purify his/her self. So, in Islamic mysticism and Sufism that pay attention to spiritual and ethical parts of Islam and show the way to ethical palmer, greater *jihad* is very important. In time of absence of Imam (God hastens his presentation) in the Shiite point of view, first *jihad* is forbidden and only *jihad* for defense is allowed. The masters of Sufism and mysticism have undertaken the teaching of this basis.

In this *jihad* Ali's *Zolfaghar* (Imam Ali's sword) that at a period of time was the murderer of Islam's enemies now is converted to recite and thinking instrument for wayfarer. With the help of Ali's manliness, wayfarer fights with imperious self and says: "**There is no manly except Ali. No sword except Zolfaghar**"<sup>20</sup> Regarding this manliness and guardianship different nations and tribes became Muslims; and not because of cutter swords of sultans, but the spiritual attraction of the masters who had no crown and throne. For this reason, it is not bad to study about the contribution of mysticism and Sufism in invitation to Islam.

Invitation to Islam is not by minor *jihad* or sword. The invitation is to ethical palmer. Islam has not based upon exterior sword religion. Although, the Prophet (PBUH) took sword in Medina and with this sword Omar the second Caliph publicized Islam evidently and citizens of different regions became Muslim. But, the main structure of Islam and the reason that improved Islam spiritually was the Prophet of mercy to all spiritual sword that was given into the hand of Imam Ali (AS). As in the story in Mathnavi Manavi we see that Ali (AS) killed his enemy not by material cutter blade, but without sword. Mulana Rumi says<sup>21</sup>:

<sup>17</sup> After coming back from one of the wars, Prophet commanded to the fighters of that war: we come back from minor *jihad* and we are ought to do greater *jihad* and that is human being fighting with his/her self.

قَدِمْتُمْ مِنَ الْجِهَادِ الْأَصْغَرِ إِلَى الْجِهَادِ الْأَكْبَرِ : مُجَاهَدَةَ الْعَبْدِ هَوَاهُ

<sup>18</sup> Sufficiently-obligatory means an obligatory duty of all Muslims but it suffices when performed by someone.

<sup>19</sup> Objective-obligatory means the act, which is obligatory to be performed by every Muslims.

<sup>20</sup> لَا فَتَى إِلَّا عَلَيَّ لَا سَيْفَ إِلَّا ذُو الْقَعَارِ

<sup>21</sup> Mathnavi Manavi, poems: 3759-3762.

O! Ali who you are all reason and vision  
Say something about what you saw

Your meekness cutter cut our soul  
Water of your knowledge cleaned our soil

Tell us, I know that there are His secrets  
Because killing without sword is of His works

So as we see such these social issues are not subjected essentially in Islam<sup>22</sup> that is they are not the first goal and intent, but as scholars of doctrine say, they are important as modus. It means that they are the ways for society that people can evolve and ethical palmer can bloom inside them. On the other hand, Satan's temptation ways be closed, so with accomplishing those commandments related to financial affairs people like Qaaroon could not be appeared by collecting wealth.

---

<sup>22</sup> One type of crime -according to its major categorization- is those crimes that appear because of just presence in the society. If the criminals of this type of crimes did not live in the society, they did not commit them.