
Concept of Jihad in Islam

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Islam's concept of jihad is, like many other concepts of Islam, one of the most misunderstood concepts. I think this has occurred because we have not focused on its place in the overall context of Islamic spiritual and metaphysical tradition. It has generally been approached in isolation and not squared with other fundamental concepts or elements of Islam. What is Islam? What does it mean to believe? What is the metaphysical content of *kalima*? To what end are all Islamic doctrines subservient? How does the concept of jihad – often designated as the sixth pillar of Islam, cohere with other five pillars of Islam? How does Islam encounter the other, especially the religious other? What does *kufr* signify? Understood in the larger context of esoteric and metaphysical foundations of Islam, what does jihad signify? It is not to ignore the historical developments in traditional understanding and

conceptualizing of jihad. In fact, it is the most traditional of approaches to the understanding of jihad that is advocated here. It is the problematic fundamentalist/ exoteric exclusivist theological or ideological approach to Islam that ignores Islam's inner or spiritual and intellectual or metaphysical dimensions that has contributed to distortions in understanding jihad.

It is noteworthy that Islam is from the root word '*slm*' that means both peace and submission. If sufficient attention is paid to these key concepts of submission and peace and one is able to link all Islamic notions to these central conceptions, the notion of jihad could be studied in proper perspective. Everything in Islam revolves around the central doctrine of "*tawhid*," which, approached from mystical and metaphysical perspective, forms the kernel of understanding Islam. How does jihad cohere with *tawhid*? Understanding jihad without

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understanding what God signifies and what belief in God and His unity connotes at the deepest metaphysical level is quite distorting. Modern Muslim fundamentalism and its conception of jihad are based on ignorance or distorted reading of Islam; Islamic conception of God and *tawhid*; and Islam's understanding of self-other relationship and Islam's relationship with diverse religious, mystical and philosophical thought currents of the traditional world. Fundamentalism mainly emphasise theological instead of metaphysical, exoteric instead of esoteric, exclusivist instead of inclusivist, and literalist instead of symbolical approach and this constricts its understanding of everything Islamic, from ritual to dogma.

In the light of normative inquiries into the basic conceptions of *tawhid*, everything falls in perfect place. In this paper it is proposed to see the notion of jihad in the light these inquiries into the meaning of Islam and its worldview. If jihad is launched to establish the reign of God's religion or spread of Islam or protect it against infidels, we must first understand what God's religion is. Closely analyzed thus, there occurs a shift in our understanding of jihad itself.

Our approach is to be distinguished from all such apologetic approaches that marginalize significance of jihad or reduce it to a minor auxiliary conception. Jihad is indeed the sixth pillar of Islam and in fact its spirit informs every other pillar of Islam. The martyr is indeed the great symbol of piety and devotion to Islam. It is true Islam that enjoins jihad and there can be no explaining away of it. But what is here intended is to attempt to understand it integrally and comprehensively and, most importantly, in light of centuries of developments in Islamic traditional thought.

Jihad not a monolithic concept

In the beginning, let it be made clear that jihad is not a monolithic conception. It is multivalent. It signifies varied things at different levels. It is not to be reduced to purely spiritual or purely political terms, something that is defining feature of Islamic civilization. Since juridical usage of the term has been too much highlighted, it has resulted in marginalisation of much more universal meaning in the Quran and *Hadith*. Its translation in European languages as 'holy war' reflects this constriction in universal meaning.

The Meaning of Submission

The end of Islamic way of life is peace, which is central to its understanding and this is obtained as a result of submission to God. What is submission? The Quran categorically states that God demands everything which is ours, our very soul, for the sake of heaven. We must submit to God with all our will, heart and mind. What is to be surrendered is separate will, the ego that separates man from Ultimate Reality. Only God is Real; all else has only derived reality. God alone truly exists. What is to be relinquished is the separating principle of ego and mind, all human interests, all that fortifies ego, separation and exclusion from larger environment.

There can be no purely material or egotistic- individually and collectively or nationally – goal directed action. God is Reality in Sufistic-metaphysical scheme. All else has illusory reality if one sees things apart from the God. Thus, there should be absolutely no doubt that in Islam no endeavour which is exclusively this worldly, nothing that belongs to the illusory empire of ego – individual or collective ego, nothing merely political or ideological, and nothing that seeks merely the kingdom of the world

are endorsed. Jihad, if fought for any motive other than proclaiming Truth and Justice, is not Islamic practice.

Metaphysical Understanding of *Shahadah*

We now turn to the question what Islam is and what it takes to be the truth to which it invites everyone. Islam is Reality-centric and entertains no claim to autonomy of creatures. The *kalima* of Islam, metaphysically is translatable as ‘There is no truth but Truth,’ or ‘there is no reality but Reality.’ Islam invites everyone neither to a creed that it dogmatically asserts, nor to a proposition that could be doubted or approached in terms of truth / falsehood binary, nor to a belief that rational cum empirical inquiry could invalidate. Islam is not a totalistic or totalizing ideology or thought construct. To put in simple terms, Islam is an invitation to take life seriously, to decipher its truth, to realize God or the ideals of truth, goodness and beauty, to be concerned with the ground of life, to enjoy life at the highest level or *ananda*. It asks to leave everything that obstructs our cognizance or perception of truth – the world of ego and slavery to passions that obfuscate heart’s eye that perceives the essence, the whatness of things.

Islam asks to discover truth, the truth of life, of being and becoming and this truth can't be attained as long as man is not willing to sacrifice everything, including his soul, for its sake. It demands transcendence of everything that stands in the way of truth – ego, desires and passions. Islam is not an ideology, or a meta-narrative, or a system of creedal propositions but existential response to the mystery of being. Islam doesn't proclaim any new truth or new message. In fact, Islam has no message to convey because truth can't be encoded in words, as Lao Tzu has said. Whatever can be thought of, imagined, conceived, described or asserted is not God or truth. *Laysa kamislihi Shayi* (nothing is like Him). Truth has infinite faces – everywhere there is the face of God, so there could be no human appropriation of it to claim finality or absolute status. The Sufis characterize *marifa* as *hairat* or state of wonder or being lost. The Sufis characterize *marifa* as *hairat* or state of wonder or being lost

Metaphysically understood, Islam transcends even the theist/atheist binary, not to speak of such binaries as Muslim/Christian, Muslim/Hindu etc. Nasr has convincingly argued that in its most universal sense anyone who accepts a Divine

revelation is a Muslim “be he a Muslim, Christian, Jew or Zorasterian. The Islamic point of view didn't take into account the Indian religions until historic contact was made with them but this definition would refer to them as well, as Hinduism came to be called by certain later Muslim sages the ‘religion of Adam’.

Islam's Notion of God

God isn't an epistemological problem at all for Islam or Sufism. But realization of our true nature is the issue and religion is meant to lead towards that goal. God from their perspective is Manifest Truth, our very breath and Light of the world. He is the inward and the outward. He is nearer to us than our jugular vein. He is reality (*al- Haqq*) itself. He encompasses or pervades all things. But His transcendence hasn't been denied thereby. When mind is purified of all dross and becomes still and the realm of known ceases, God dawns. God is the only knower. He is the Hearing and the Seeing, according to Quran.

What is God? Not a person conceived in anthropomorphic sense, not a being among other beings, not some cosmic policeman, not some being in the heavens but Existence

in its totality, both transcendent and immanent in Sufistic and metaphysical view. He is Reality, Light, and Truth and in fact all beautiful names describe him. He alone is. He is in every atom. Everything celebrates Him. The Beloved is everywhere for the lover. For the Gnostic this world is charged with the grandeur of God. God is not an abstract essence only but everything existent proclaims Him by mere existing. There are no atheists in the absolute sense of the term. There is a *tawhid* of *mulhids* also according to Ibn Arabi though quite a narrow view of *tawhid* it is. There is no way of escaping God or denying Him in absolute terms. God needs no human advocate to be proclaimed to the world. Jihad can't be launched to teach people to subscribe to a particular view of *tawhid*. Even Buddhists have a sublime version of *tawhid* in their impersonal conception of divine as Isa Nuruddin, one of the greatest Sufi metaphysicians of the 20th century has argued.

For mystics and Sufis nothing is so commonplace as experiencing God and nothing is so truly descriptive of human state. God is not a being among other beings, an object out there, that could be perceived in some ecstatic state. God is a percept rather

than a concept as Ibn Arabi said. God, in the Unitarian Sufistic perspective, is the essence of existence. He is the Isness of things. He is Existence in its totality. God constitutes all pervasive Environment (*al-Muhit* in the Quranic parlance) that normal man lives, moves and has his being in Him. Adam saw God, the essences before the Fall as the fog of passions and desires had not blurred his vision. Things are metaphysically transparent; only we need to possess the right view, as the Buddha said. God is there so close and in fact the light of the eyes, the light with which everything is seen, and everything is illumined as Ghazali said. God is the Light of the world. If we see without blinkers, without the lenses of conceptual intellect we see God and nothing but God. Mystical discipline is simply for cleansing the perception. From a Unitarian perspective we are ever in God's presence, ever breathing the fragrance of the Beloved. God in His immanence is the whole world of perception, the positivity of manifestation. This is the metaphysical meaning of phenomenon of Muhammad and his status as a messenger.

The Son of Christian theology amounts to the same thing. The

Father (Essence) is known through the Son. Metaphysically speaking, to live truly is to live in God, as God is Life, the Larger Life. The life of love is the life divine. God is love. The experience of love, of beauty, of goodness – all are experiences of God and for a Gnostic all experiences are experiences of God. The finite can't be outside the Divine Infinitude. So the world is necessarily in God or God's visible Face. As the Quran says, God is both the Manifest (form) and the Hidden (essence). Osho has put more emphasis on the immanent God. Experiencing God is experiencing life in its full splendour. Life is the only God for all religions as C. R. Jain has argued in his provocative study on comparative religions titled, *Key to Knowledge*. Vedantic ternary describing God as Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss is found elsewhere also. Life, larger or higher life, life divine, the life of Spirit, the life of Love, is, indeed, the promise of all religions and mysticisms. Evelyn Underhill's classical presentation of mystical viewpoint also foregrounds this point. Moksha, vision, nirvana—all are symbols of richer or larger life.

Hence, nothing is simpler or more accessible than the experience of God. In fact, God is the Environment, *al-*

Muhit, in the Quranic phrase. The self builds an illusory boundary that demarcates or separates. The self is illusory. God is All-pervading. He alone exists. God alone is real; all else has derived existence but the essence is one. The Spirit is one. Jihad must lead to realization of higher values of life or it is not jihad.

A *Mu'min*, according to Sufism, is one who gets annihilated before the face of Truth. The Sufi is a watcher or pure witness. He allows existence or Reality or Truth (Real is equated with Truth in the East and Islam though not in the West and Truth isn't reduced to property of propositions also in the East) to speak, having surrendered/transcended himself. He becomes a hollow bamboo, a flute on which God plays the notes. He has no ideas or thought constructs to impose on others. He preaches only the nothingness of himself. In silence is revealed the treasure that God is. This silence is because one can't speak with human tongue of the Ineffable, of the Unconditioned. The Sufi doesn't talk about Reality or God but talks Reality or God. He transcends the realm of "about" unlike the theologian. That is why the Sufi doesn't need to interpret and wrangle about the question of interpretation. He isn't caught up

in textual world at all. He lives truth, is truth. He doesn't need mediation of language. He is pure awareness, pre-reflective and pre-linguistic awareness. He has become a mirror. Seer and seen has disappeared and only seeing is there.

Language doesn't enter. The Sufi is centered in God and thus in Nothingness or Void. God is Reality. He is Pure Consciousness. A Sufi is one who has put duality away and sees two worlds as one. One he seeks, knows, sees and calls, as Rumi tells us. Even the binary of truth and falsehood, good and evil are transcended in Sufi vision. "Since I have known God, neither truth nor falsehood has entered my heart" as Abu Hafs Haddad said. This is because the Sufi is in a state where neither good nor evil entereth as BaYazid says. This metaethical transcendence of mystic has been misunderstood by its critics as implying rejection of law and ethics while as the fact is that mystics alone in the history of religion have shown exemplary moral character as they have transcended the desiring self or *nafsi amara* which incites one to evil. Only good comes from the mystic because he has transcended the plane of mind, of desiring self which chooses and is caught up in

the net of time or desires. His hands have become God's hands and God acts through him, so to speak.

Metaphysical understanding of God as Infinite and All-Possibility subsumes everything and transcends mere believing posture and theistic/atheistic binary. Osho's identification of God with Existence, Isness or what is, to use Krishnamurti's phrase, can't be questioned by agnostic/atheistic scholarship.

Metaphysical Understanding of the Prophet

We now discuss metaphysical and Sufistic understanding of the Prophet of Islam to show how the second clause of Islamic *kalima* is affirmed in a subtle way at deeper level in its universal sense by all normal men irrespective of their religious affiliations. Even the so-called atheists who nevertheless choose life instead of death and deny the God of theology in the name of truth that they think they are in possession of can't but affirm, in their own way, the Prophet. For Ibn Arabi and Sufi metaphysicians, the Prophet is Logos, the Pole of existence, and the principle of manifestation. Were it not for this principle things would still be in the abysmal darkness of

void or 'adm. *Wajud* is acquired or transition from unmanifest archetypes or ideas to manifest state of things is made possible because of the messenger who unveils or expresses Absolute, which would otherwise be unmanifest. God is a Hidden Treasure and the wish to get unveiled is what the idea of messengership expresses in its deepest sense.

Seen in this light we can assert that life expresses itself in countless forms and in fact existence as such is by virtue of Muhammad. God blesses life; otherwise it would cease to exist. Every flower that blooms, every bird that chirps, every child that smiles, every blade of grass that grows proclaim the grandeur of God and manifests the Light of Muhammad. Life is a supreme value and so is freedom and the Prophet is the metaphysical ground of life and its essential transcendence, its freedom. All our endeavours, whether we know it or not, are ultimately directed to affirm and promote life and thus praise God. Our breathing, despite us, goes on and thus we go on blessing the Prophet who is the positivity of Manifestation. Wherever and in whatever form life dances and smiles there the Prophet is blessed. The Prophet can't be really mocked. Can the sun, the light, be

mocked except by the blind? "The more they blaspheme against God, the more they praise God" said Meister Eckhart. The same can be said about the blasphemers. The Prophet symbolizes life, larger life, richer life, life glorified (that is deeper import of his name Muhammed which means the praised one). Who can condemn life without condemning himself at the very moment? The blasphemers are unaware of the ontological reality that the phenomenon of Muhammad designates and Muslims are rightly concerned to defend their symbols. When *jihadi* spirit unleashes against blasphemers this deeper metaphysical understanding, it shouldn't be lost sight of.

The Prophet, existentially interpreted, is the ideal pole of man, the principle of transcendence and freedom of Spirit that makes authentic life possible. From the perspective of a lover he is the First and the Last as it is through him that our Origin and End, our God, speaks through us.

The Prophet stands for all that is noble, sublime, grand and great in life. He is the voice of freedom against all man-made shackles, against everything that enslaves man, his thought and his

imagination. The Prophet stands for all that is noble, sublime, grand and great in life. He is the envoy of God or transcendence and it is transcendence that makes man a bird of *lamakaan*, a free soul who is not just a creature determined from without but capable of transcending space and time and all the fetters that bind him.

One who blesses the Prophet blesses by implication "the world and the universal Spirit (*El-Ruh*), the Universe and the Intellect, both the Totality and the Centre" as Schuon says. Schuon further explains the metaphysical understanding of the 'blessing' (*durood*) and the 'salutation' (*salam*), which are applied, not only to the Prophet, but also to his family and his companions:

For Islam it is the Light of Muhammad that is the principle of existence, otherwise things would never come from their archetypal abyss to the world of forms. Muhammad is "Mercy of the Worlds" according to the Quran. If the world is the breath of the Compassionate, it is because of the ontological fact of Mercy that anything exists. It is by virtue of the Light of Muhammad that the sun shines, that rain comes, that we love and that life continues. It is this

mercy that animates life in all its diversity. Life, larger and deeper life, life of joy and acceptance, life as benediction and celebration (*ananda*), life of harmony and goodwill, life lived under the tutelage of Holy Spirit, life that is glorified, life that never ends, life in God or the Divine Environment – all these are various meanings and implications of the Prayer on the Prophet. One could possibly deny transcendent invisible God but who could deny Muhammad because esoterically and metaphysically understood he is the principle of manifestation or existence and thus our very breathing. He is this life in its positivity, in its totality. And he is the silence of the darkness. And he is the joy of light abounding life of the world. What ordinary people call life or existence or beauty the lovers of God call Muhammad. And let it be clear life is lived only by lovers in its fullness. God is love. God is ever blessing Muhammad according to the Quran.

Understood in its deepest metaphysical sense, God is blessing Life. That is why everything is said to be ever busy in glorifying God and in praising/blessing Muhammad. To be is to bless existence by very definition. So who can afford to deny Muhammad? Someone (such as

atheists) could afford to be incredulous towards transcendent invisible Divinity but there can be no escape from the very air we breathe, the very sun that illumines our darkness, which are there because of God's immanence in the world or because there is Muhammad, the Principle of Manifestation.

Islam and Terrorism

The terrorist fundamentalist (not all fundamentalists are terrorists however) seeks his own kingdom and not the kingdom of God. Man must be noughted for God to be. And terrorist can't consent to be noughted. Terrorist believes in holier than thou attitude. And Islam exalts humility. The Quran asserts that above every knower is another knower. To know Truth is to know that one doesn't know. God is the only Knower. A terrorist takes the prerogative of being God's advocate even though the Quran expressly forbids even the Prophet to take such a position.

No mystic has ever been a terrorist and it is the mystic alone who tastes God, who sees divine realities. It is only those who claim to be personal secretaries of God who can coolly dismiss people to hell and reserve all the seats in heaven for themselves.

It is only the inwardly satisfied and peaceful soul who gets access to heaven. The terrorist has yet to find the restful heart and the still point of existence as otherwise he could not dare to rob others of peace. Those who see God are stilled inwardly and all their actions are done by God. Islam, like other traditions, advocates actionless action by attributing all actions to unmoved Mover, to God. The Chinese called it *wu wei* and that is what the Christians mean by saying that everything should be done under the inspiration of Holy Spirit. A *mujahid* can't act out of vengeance. His sole motive is to glorify God, to bear witness to Truth. As long as he operates for any merely humanly reason or motive he is not a *mujahid*. The greatest purpose for man is to find God – and the martyr gives witness by sacrificing his self and his life. Those who love and have been blessed to know love can't be seen any other way in the world where God, the Beloved alone exists. How can he be a terrorist?

Islam has clearly rejected the option of coercion for achieving any end, even the supreme end of Islam. Terrorism involves sacrificing means for ends. Islam sharply differentiates itself from certain secularist ideologies that care only for ends and

don't care for the permissibility or righteousness of means.

Islam has defined *Mu'min* in expressly antiterrorist terms. "The *Mu'min* is one from whose hands life and property of others is safe." And what is a terrorist- the person from whose hands other's life and property is not safe. For Islam nothing is holier than life and in fact God is Life. God is described as *al-Hayy (Alive)*. In fact it is easy to see Life as the closest definition of God. God as *Chit*, as Self, as Knower, as "I am that I am" is Life. Terrorist puts his ideology above life. There can be no greater blasphemy.

Prophets come to establish peace and weed out *fasad* (chaos and strife). In fact, the Quran expressly declares that strife (*fasad*) is outlawed after Islam has established peace. Terrorism is another name for what the Quran calls *fasad*.

Religious Exclusivism and Terrorism

What fosters exclusivist thesis and contributes to the genesis of terrorist's attempt to deny the other as other is commitment to an interpretation of Islam that asserts not only that Islam is the best of religions but the only religion

approved by God and canceling or outlawing all other religions or labeling other religions as pagan, polytheistic or atheistic. This exclusivist interpretation further claims that other religions can't coexist amicably with Islam. They have to be belittled and rejected as false as they are held to be untrue. What does it mean that Islam is the best of religions? This question is best understood in light of perennialist approach that defends both exclusivist character of religion at one plane and the inclusivist view at another plane without needing to reject one at the coast of the other.

Philology has been badly trumped by exoteric authorities to argue for Islam's exclusivism, as Joseph Lombard has noted. One example is the interpretation of the word "*Islam*." To quote Lombard:

Today, as for the past 1200 years or more, the word "Islam" is taken to indicate a particular set of beliefs and practices adhered to by a certain segment of humanity. But when the Quran was first revealed what did the word mean? As Toshiko Izatsu has demonstrated in his masterful books God and Man in the Quran and Ethic-Religious Concepts of the Quran, the original meaning of this word in pre-Islamic poetry is not only

to "to submit," but moreover to give over something that is particularly precious to oneself and which is painful to abandon, to somebody who demands it. So when the Prophet Muhammad first presented a "message" that claimed to be "Islam", the words would have been understood far differently than what we understand today. Moreover, the way this word is used in the Quran actually provides the raw material for a very eloquent understanding of religious pluralism, one wherein all revelations are seen as different ways of giving to God which is most difficult to give - our very selves.

Fundamentalism practically denies the unity of revelation. For it the Quranic claim that God has decreed different ways of worship and has no room for only one religion or one community are hardly worth reckoning. The distorted sense of jihad as war against other religious communities pursued primarily to establish supremacy of certain religious formulations or a certain community follows from the ideology that is anti-traditional, anti-intellectual, non-spiritual, literalist and exclusivist and must not be confounded with the universal and primordial religion of Islam.

Islam has censured everything that leads to terrorist mentality. It takes such a severe notice of such otherwise ignored evils as back biting and slandering. Where one can't imagine criticizing others *in absentia*, how is it possible to disturb the other's private space by all kinds of terrorist activities? In Islam, all ethical principles are aimed at transcending desiring self or ego and when the ego is transcended there can be no basis for terrorist activity. At the root of terrorist action is assertion of ego, assertion of one's viewpoint at the cost of others'. All religions advocate the ideals of love, selflessness, humility and no religion allows violence to men. Terrorism is incompatible with any religion whatsoever. In fact, God consciousness by definition involves ego denying. One can't be oneself and still think that he is glorifying God. In fact *iman* is a vital act that transports man out of himself. To be properly human, one has to transcend the world of *nasuut*, the world of man. Man is not to be identified with the mind, with thoughts that are born in time.

Religion is in ultimate analysis of love and charity. Jesus defined God as love. Sufism celebrates God as our Beloved. Surrender or transcendence of ego fructifies in life of self-

sacrifice, in love and charity. Religion binds man to God – i.e. reality to Reality, self to Self, temporal to eternal. And what is eternal, what is unconditioned is love and not any temporal activity. Religion seeks to take man into a realm where distinctions don't count. In God who is man's origin and end there is no longer any distinction – all relative valuations, all affirmations and negations are transcended.

Jihad, supposed to save souls of others, is not entertained in Islam. Islam enjoins jihad to save one's self. It is far too difficult to save oneself as Islam envisages it than to die fighting others who are considered as enemies of God. Saving others is not a prerogative of peacekeeping forces. Who has not saved himself can't save others. Who can claim to have done everything possible to save his soul from corruption? Many would-be-martyrs believe that paradise awaits them if they are killed. If the kingdom of God were to be purchased with such a short cut it would make mockery of the great disciplinary regimen that all religions have suggested. Without first being a Muslim and *Mu'min* how can one become a martyr. Without greater jihad no salvation is possible. If one dies for the cause of God or Truth one must know what that Truth is.

If based on one's supposed supremacy in *taqwa* it can't be jihad. Such self-righteousness is alien to Islamic spirit. Ideally a Sufi who has transcended all personal motives is best fitted to be a *Mujahid*. As Ali's famous encounter with his enemy shows, he refused to kill him because the later had spitted him on his face and this had infuriated him and personal vengeance got mixed up with the purity of intention.

The Quran asks us: Are you concerned with truth? Are you striving towards Truth? And this is jihad in its widest sense - striving in the way of God, the Good, and the Beautiful. Jihad is synonymous with spiritual quest and all human activity done without the sense of personal agency. The function of revelation is only to reintegrate man, to make him aware that he is in possession of great treasure, the Kingdom of God. But man is heedless, according to the Quran. Greater Jihad summons men back to the lost paradise. A modern mystical thinker has well expressed human predicament: "We have not been thrown out of the Garden, but miss it because we are not aware; we have fallen in a dream-like trance state. The dream consists of one's desire to reach somewhere else."

Islam has lauded gratitude and prayer as defining features of Islamic belief. This gratitude towards God is to be understood as thanking Existence and loving it and encountering it in a prayerful spirit. To quote a modern interpreter of Sufism:

God is found only in the heart of one who is utterly in praise of existence because it is so incredibly beautiful, so utterly valuable. We have not earned it, we are not worthy of it. To be is a gift. Life is a gift, love is a gift, and all that is, is a sheer gift from God. All that we can do is to praise him. That very praising is enough, because that praise becomes prayer – prayer is nothing else. Prayer is the heart in tremendous rejoicing, thankfulness, saying the existence is good

Thus understood, establishing Islam or the religion of God that jihad aims at also implies striving for everything that is grand and noble and sublime in all the domains of human culture, from sciences to arts.

Islam bases itself upon the idea of establishing equilibrium within the being of man, as well as in the human

society. As Nasr says: "This equilibrium, which is the terrestrial reflection of Divine Justice and the necessary condition for peace in the human domain, is the basis upon which the soul takes flight towards that peace which, to use Christian terms, 'passeth all understanding.'" Jihad is to be carried at every stage of life to keep this equilibrium. Both the individual and human collectivity are ever in danger of loss of equilibrium due to so many factors. So a continuous battle, at once both inward and outward, is needed to combat the forces of disintegration.

Modern man is quite misinformed about the nature of religion and metaphysics that grounds dogmas. He can't but misunderstand and mistrust the theory and practice of jihad being poorly informed. It is another tragedy that many Muslims have a constricted and sometimes even distorted understanding of Jihad. To appropriate Aurobindo's famous phrase, "all life is yoga", and one could say, "all life is jihad". There is a need to understand the universalistic perspective that the Quran adopts. It is also, in its higher sense, Jihad is soul's adventure towards realizing the Absolute. ■