CHAPTER V

NON-VIOLENCE IN ISLAM

The religion of Islam came to India not all of a sudden. The process took several centuries. Though the province of Sindh was conquered in early 8th century it was not until the incursions of Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad of Ghor that serious settlement of the subcontinent with Muslim took place. It was not only the forced conversions that increased the number of Muslim in India. But the unfair taxes called jizya on all non-Muslims had an effect. Many Hindus were forced to convert to Islam to escape from the punishing taxes. The invading sultans like Qutb-ud-din Aibak and Ala-ud-din Khilji often offered clemency to the enemy after their defeat if they converted to Islam. When the Mughals established their empire, the whole of India was almost completely under the Muslim rule, especially during the rule of Aurangzeb.

Sources of Non-violence in Islam

Islam has been so integrally associated with sword that one can hardly associate it with nonviolence. “Quran in one hand and sword in the other” is the popular stereotype and this is very widely disseminated indeed. This stereotype arose during the Crusades in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Thereafter, whenever any conflicting and confrontational situation arose between Muslims in the east and Christians in the west, this stereotype was popularized. It should be remembered that those prejudices, which arise during a particular conflict between two persons or communities, get further hardened during further conflicts and in course of time these prejudices acquire facticity of their own and no amount of argument would diminish their intensity.

During the nineteenth century, the colonial West sought to establish its complete hegemony over the Islamic countries and thus came in intense conflict with them during that period. The Islamic countries came under Western subjugation in varying degrees. This situation lasted, in certain cases, for over a century. The Islamic world was in turmoil all through and the conflict between these Islamic nations and

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the West remained intense. Islam and Islamic nations were consequently projected as violent, fanatical, and barbaric, refusing to accept domination by the civilized West.

In the Indian situation too the Quran and Sword Stereotype found ready acceptance for obvious reasons. Muslims were as seen as invaders and aggressors. They came in hordes and conquered India and subjugated it with the power of their sword. They not only conquered India with sword but also held it under their sway for several centuries. During the nineteenth century, when the British rule was established in India and Indians, particularly the Hindus, acquired Western secular education and imbibed modern liberal ideas, they felt ashamed that they had to remain under the sway of outsiders for centuries. This sense of hurt was further aggravated when they discovered their own glorious past. They felt that though they had had great achievements to their credit in pre-Islamic past, they got subjugated and they had to live under Muslim subjugation for several centuries. Naturally, they found it soothing to blame Islam and its fanatic violent nature for their subjugation rather than themselves.2

Thus it will be seen that there were many takers for the stereotype “Quran in one hand and sword in the other.” Even today many non-Muslims continue to argue vehemently that Islam preaches conversion through sword, if other methods fail. Some Quranic verses are also adduced in corroboration of their argument. Those who are not well versed in the Quranic text and context, history and causes of revelation (ashad al-nuzul), easily get convinced about the “violent and warmongering” nature of Islam. The concept of Jihad has also created serious misunderstanding in the minds of both Muslims and non-Muslims. Jihad is often understood as a war of aggression, subjugator of non-Muslims and imposing jizya over them. It is no wonder, then, that Islam and violence have become an integral whole.3

Islam is not religion of violence; neither violence is integral to it. The very world “Islam” is the very negation of the concept of violence. Islam means surrender to the will of God on the one hand and establishing peace on the other. The word for peace in Arabic is “Salam.” When Muslims greet each other, they invoke peace- salam alaykum (peace be on you). Not only Muslims, all human beings could be greeted

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.p.99
with these words. Thus it is a religious duty of a Muslim to strive for establishment of peace in society. A Muslim is one who surrenders to the will of Allah and is an establisher of peace while Islam means establishment of peace. Muslim means one who establishes peace through his action and conduct.

Also, surrender to the will of Allah also compels him to strive for the establishment of peace. Allah is merciful and compassionate—Al-Rehman, Al Rahim. Violence and mercy and violence and compassion can not go together. One who is merciful and compassionate cannot issue any commandment for needless violence. Violence at best could be permitted by a compassionate being only to remove suffering and injustices. It is this accepts of jihad which is necessary to understand. Also, is just-Adil- and he commands others to do justice. He commands in the Holy Koran: “Be just, that is nearer to observance of duty.” He also requires that harted of others should not motivate you to do injustice to them. It would be unjust. Thus in the same verse it is said: “Oh, you who believe, be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice; and let not harted of a people incite you not to act equitably.”

NON-VIOLENCE IN KORAN

The value system of non-violence in Islam can be found both in ethical and mystical forms of manifestation. The ethical content of this value-system occurs frequently in the Koran, where it is said that path to the attainment of peace with God has through the attainment of peace with mankind. The very nature of God as understood in Islam is As-salam or the cause of peace. Peace has been proclaimed as a supreme virtue for personal behaviour also. The Koran mentions that the (faithful) slaves of the beneficent are they who walk upon the earth modestly and when the foolish ones address them answer peace. It has been further exemplified at another place in the Koran where it is said: “Be modest in thy bearing and subdue thy voice. Lo! The harshest of all voices is the voice of the ass.” Thus sobriety, modesty and lack of tension are the prime virtues of demeanour which are prescribed by the Koran.

Apart from these personal norms, which might be less directly related to the concept of non-violence, there are many injunctions in the Koran which emphasize

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4 The Koran, 5-8-6.
5 Ibid, 19-25-63.
6 Ibid, 6-5-44.
the need for 'mercy', 'helpfulness', 'moderation', etc., in one's attitude towards the opponents and enemies, having a direct significance to the value system of non-violence. The retributive form of justice has been sanctioned by the Koran which bears a close resemblance to the Talmudic tradition. However, one who can give up the right of retribution out of charity is said by to be entitled to a higher status in the eyes of God. Mercy and kindness as virtues have been given the place of supremacy in the ethical system of Islam: humility too occupies an equally complementary place in the hierarchy of these virtues. The Koran says:

“Say unto who belongeth whatsoever is in heavens and the earth, say unto Allah, He hath for himself mercy”. And again the statement, “And my mercy embraceth all things,”7 reveals that not only mercy is sought as a virtue in men but man has to emulate it from God who is conceived of as an embodiment of mercy. The control over one's anger and an attitude of forgiveness towards all are the virtues for which God is said to bestow love upon his men, according to the Koran.

These values concerning personal ethics have also found an expression in the social ethics of Islam, where emphasis has been laid on unity of mankind, irrespective of the differences of national cities and tribes. The Koran says, “O ye man! We created you from a single pair of a male and female and made you into nations and that ye may know each other—not that ye may despise each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is who is the most righteous of you: And Allah is well acquainted with all things.”8 This clearly indicates that both the norm of non-violence and the doctrine of the unity of mankind are existent in the Koranic tradition of Islam. Righteousness which is a cardinal principle of non-violence has been prescribed in Islam as a personal value and a social code. That it has a place of importance in the teaching of the Koran is clearly indicative of its commitment to non-violence. It is very often discussed that the Islamic social ethic is based on a principle of discrimination between the believer and the non-believer that the use of force and discrimination against the non-believer has been prescribed as legitimate. While their may be some element of truth in these statements, it must also be remembered that some form of religious ethnocentrism has been universal to the major religions. If a religion does not possess it, it may be an exception. The more

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7 Ibid. 7-6-12.
8 Ibid. 4-9-13.
relevant question, however, is not that how much of religious legitimatization for violence is prescribed in a particular religion, but on the contrary as to how much emphasis on non-violence has there been in its various traditions. Whereas to compare the balance-sheet of both violence and non-violence may be more commendable, to compare only the latter also serves a fruitful academic and practical purpose to point to the common denominators of culture of non-violence in the various traditions, irrespective of their apparent differences which are too well recognized.

The Koranic tradition from this point of view does possess an ethical system which transcends the barrier of religious ethnocentrism and emphasizes the brotherhood and unity of mankind. The unity that is emphasized is evident from the degree of tolerance that has been advocated in the preachings of the Koran in relation to the prophets and religions of other nations. It says “Say Ye: We believe in Allah and His revelations to the prophets, in what was revealed to Abraham and Ismael, Issac and Jacob; in what was revealed to all the nations: and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to the other Apostles from their Lord; We do not make any distinction between one and another of the prophets: For we submit entirely to the Allah”. This shows that in reality Islam had a liberal attitude towards the spiritual leaders of other faiths and religions contrary to the popular image about its parchialism and tradition of intolerance.

This is further evidenced from the characteristics of an ideal Muslim that have been laid down in the Koran. The chief among the virtues that have been prescribed are righteousness and love in dealings with fellow human beings. The Koran say: “It is not righteous that ye turn your faces (in prayer) towards, the east or the west; but righteousness is of him who believes in God; and in the hereafter (akhirat) and in the help and guidance from Allah (angels); and in all the scriptures and in the prophets: who giveth money for God’s sake unto his kindred and unto orphans and the poor and the strangers and those needy who ask; and for the (redemption of) captives: who is constant at prayers and gives alms and of those who perform their convenant when they have convenanted; and who behave themselves patiently in hardship and adversity and in times of distress. These are they that are the righteous (muttaqi) and

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9 Ibid.2-1-36.
It is thus evident that Islam is based on ethics of humanism and reciprocal love. The ethics of nonviolence that is contained in Islam is of an activistic and positive nature; it is based on the doctrine of doing positive good to human beings and extending help to them in the hour of their adversity.

In this respect the tradition of non-violence as maintained by the Koran comes closer to the Confucian and the Christian traditions rather than the Hinduistic. With the Christian tradition of course it has “affinity of the blood” since both have emerged from the same parental stock of the Judaic and Hebrew tradition. But its resemblance to the Confucian tradition is based on the homogeneity of the virtues that are preached by the two—What is universal love and righteousness in Islam is jen in Confucianism. The Koran, unlike the Gitā or the other Hindu scriptures, does not associate the norm of non-violence with ascetic self-denial, although it does forcefully extol the virtues of moderation, self-control and modesty in the believers. However asceticism is not carried to the extent which one finds in the Jainism, Buddhism and the Hinduism. On the other hand the early Vedic and the Upanisadic traditions of non-violence might be said to be closer to that in the Koran. In both, the element of positive universalism is predominant.

However, one can find found in the Koran some references to nonviolence in the form of such ethical injunctions as are found in Hinduism. Animal killing on certain occasions is prohibited in the Islam. The Koran says: “To hunt and to eat the fish of the sea is made lawful for you for seafarers; but to hunt on land is forbidden to you so long as you are on pilgrimage. Be mindful of your duties to Allah unto whom ye will be gathered.”11 This clearly indicates that in regard also to the killing there are injunctions in Islam, although from a total point of view, the ethical system of this religion is oriented towards the “non-cosmic love of nature” and the “anthropocentric” ethics. In Hinduism it is the cosmic love of nature which constitutes the pivotal point and leads to the ethics of universalism and mystical identity of all souls. From Islam and Christianity, this form of ethics is absent and as a result of it the humanistic element in these religious systems tends to be more activistic than philosophical. The ethics of nonviolence in Hinduism is of a generalized and diffused character whereas the same in Christianity and Islam is particularized, being confined

10 Ibid.
11 Ibid. 15-17-37.
only to the inter-human level. In Islam however, this specificity gets further narrowed as a result of its theocratic ethnocentrism; the discrimination between the “believer” and “non-believer” though equally present both in Christianity and Islam has been more manifest in the latter, both at the political and the sociological levels. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the religious parochialism of Islam has been exaggerated. The co-existence of all faith has been accepted in Islam. The Koran says: Unto you, your religion and unto me, my religion.”12 The facts mentioned above should suffice to establish that the values of universal humanism and tolerance have not been wanting in Islam. The mystical movement (Sufism) in Islam which is based on the philosophy of universal love, equality of all beings and the self’s identity with God, can compare with any other religious-philosophical tradition of universal humanism.

Besides, there is evidence to show that the ethic of universal love has been fully emphasized and ordained in the Koranic tradition. In the Koran there is reference to the unity of all beings created by God. It says: “There is not an animal that lives on Earth, not a being that flies on its wings, but forms part of communities like you. Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they all shall be gathered to their lord in the end.”13 It shows that unity of all creation in the being of God is recognized in Islam, although it could not very much influence the ethical system which developed from this tradition. In Hinduism, this unity led to the ethic of “non-killing” and “non-injury” to all living creatures. In Islam it could not develop to this extent; killing of animals for food and for the good of human beings is justified and has been allowed. However, the sanction for killing did not mean an unmerciful behaviour towards the animals or other living creatures. Mercy and kindness towards all comprise the general ethic of Islam. The Koranic injunction is to love all and to be merciful to all.

Thus, it is evident that the value system of non-violence has been prominent in the tradition of the Koran. Some of the cardinal elements of this system of values are “emphasis on love for all,” “mercy and kindness to others,” faith in the unity of all mankind, and acceptance of equality of all creatures in the kingdom of God. These values render the Islamic ethics concomitant with the positive concept of non-

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12 Ibid.
13 Ibid. 15-17-39.
violence. Love in the Koran does not signify a merely passive feeling of sympathy with the fellow beings but an attitude of active responsiveness and altruism. This renders it much more ethical and human. Similarly, the concept of mercy in the Koran implies active help to the poor, the beggar, the suffering, etc., and not merely a vicarious, and subjective sharing of their pain or suffering. Lust and anger are proclaimed as great evils and die-virtues, which one must avoid. Taking into consideration all these factors it may be said that the value system of non-violence as contained in the Koran illustrates the richness and positive commitment of Islam to the tradition of non-violence.

NON-VIOLENCE IN HADITH

The value-system of non-violence is also clearly indicated in the Hadith, the collection of various traditions of Prophet Mohammed as narrated by his various compatriots and fellow spiritual leaders. There are about 20,000 such traditions of the holy prophet and a number of these contain the ethics of non-violence. These have a two-fold significance for the study of non-violence in the Islamic tradition. First, these offer additional facts about non-violence in the Islamic tradition; secondly, these contain a more exhaustive explanation of the various traditions of Islam as revealed through the Koran the Hadith contains a number of extremely unequivocal confirmation of the value system of non-violence in the religico-cultural tradition of Islam. It mentions Prophet Mohammed as saying that one who helps violence and tyranny is forever under the wrath of God.\(^{14}\) This unqualified condemnation of violence is an incontrovertible testimony to the existence of an ethic of non-violence in Islam. Whereas the retributive form of justice has been sanctioned in Islam retribution, itself has never been eulogized. It is treated in the Hadith as a necessary evil and whenever one could avoid it from the ethical or emotional sphere of his action, it led to spiritual grace. Mercifulness is treated as a supreme virtue in the Hadith also; it is through mercy to His creatures that God's mercy could be obtained.\(^{15}\)

The value-system of non-violence is evident from the ethical injunctions contained in the tradition of the Hadith. Among the practical commandments of Islam the Prophet Mohammed mentioned the following: "(i) Be with that which God has

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\(^{14}\) Ibu-i-Maja, Hadith, 1, p.421.
\(^{15}\) Ibid. p.65.
allotted to you, (ii) Avoid those acts which are prohibited and excel all other persons in your obeisance to Lord; (iii) Be kind to your neighbour and you will turn a perfect Moomin; (iv) Don’t laugh too much for too much laughing deadens the heart; (v) Approve that for others which you approve for yourself and you will thereby become a Musalman.  These ethical norms illustrate the fundamental bases of non-violence. The last moral commandment particularly resembles the norms of nonviolence in the Confucian and the Christian traditions. It is more positive, than even - Confucianism which had only said do not do to others what you do not like for yourself whereas Mohammed says “Approve that for the others which you approve for yourself.” In the former, orientation is towards negative morality, i.e., what one should not do; in the latter, the, orientation is towards positive action, viz., the right from the conduct that one should perform. Islam has basically an activistic and humanistic orientation in its value-system, though it is circumscribed due to historical and cultural reasons which lead to an under-estimation of its tradition of non-violence.

The specific historico-cultural factors which circumscribe and narrow down the Islamic ethics of non-violence (that it applies to believers only and not to the non-believers), are derived from its monotheistic tradition. It also offers a metaphysical explanation of the centripetal nature of the ethics of non-violence as found in this religico-cultural system. In Islam, as Schuon writes “Every man is his own priest by the mere fact of being a Moslem; he is the patriarch. Imam or Caliph of his family; in the latter is reflected the entire Islamic society. Man is in himself a unity he is the image of the creator whose vicar (khalifat) he is on the earth; he cannot accordingly be a layman. The family is also a unity; it is a society within a society an impenetrable block like the at once responsible and resigned beings, the Moslem himself, and like the whole Islamic world, which is of an almost incorruptible homogeneity and stability. Man, family and society are cast according to the idea of unity of which they are so many adaptations; they are unities as are Allah and His word, the Koran.  This element of internal solidarity and independence of the Muslim faithful contributed, on the one hand, to the growth of an ethno-centralism in the Islamic community, and on the other, introduced in the social status of the individual in Islam.

an element of freedom and voluntaristic participation in the Islamic community.\textsuperscript{18}

The ethno-centricism of Islam has, however, not precluded from its structure of values, the norms embodying unequivocal support to non-violence. In the \textit{Hadith} there are many references where non-violence has been extolled as a value in the social intercourse of the members in a society. Such social behaviour which might lead to the exploitation and suffering of other human beings has been declared as sinful. The hoarding of grains or money for profit, acts of usury and bad treatment of the members of family have been declared to be irreligious. Social obligations towards children, wife and other members of family occupy as much importance according to the \textit{Hadith} as the religious duties. The basic social obligations are not to be neglected even after a complete self-surrender to the divine obligations.\textsuperscript{19}

The \textit{Hadith} forbids the eating of meat while on pilgrimage or holy War and rules against the killing of animals when they are in helpless condition. Tyranny and violence caused to fellow human beings for one's own gain have been called un-Islamic. Similarly, it lays down that God holds those persons dearest to Him who do not retaliate violently even though they have the power to do so.\textsuperscript{20}

**NON-VIOLENCE IN LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS**

The value-system of non-violence as revealed in the \textit{Koran} and preserved by the tradition of the \textit{Hadith} was also kept alive in the literary and philosophical works of writers and thinkers in Arabia and Persia. In Arabic literature\textsuperscript{21} there are constant references to non-violence, which is given the place of a highest moral virtue. Non-violence is equated with such personal virtues as generosity, kindness, patience, justice and trust. The emphasis on kindness and generosity is most prominent and gets the maximum support. Usottai writes: "There is nothing else on par with virtue and kindness which taste sweet and appear pleasant."\textsuperscript{22} Kindness is also extolled by Ghazzali, Razi, Mutoabbi and other Arabic litterateurs. Sayedish Sharifur Razi expresses his desire for a state of just and benevolent social order and prays: "May God be merciful to the man who helps people in procuring their rights, removes

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Tir Miazi sharif, Hadith, No22,p.55.
\item Dewan al Hamsa by Abu Tamam bin Usottai, p.232.
\item Abia Tamamhin Usotta, Hamsa, Vol.II p.40.
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tyranny from them as he sees it and supports the right claimant of just demand.”

Ghazzali, on the other hand, gives an interpretation of kindness which comes closest to the concept of non-violence. Kindness according to him is the basis of good conduct which “lies in that you should be friendly to him which is unfriendly to you, never refuse (kindness) to one who requests it to you and forgive him who is unjust to you.”

Mutnabbi in his *Dewan* lays emphasis on generosity and kindness as natural virtues for man which is the signs of greatness. According to him “the ideal human life does not allow either to bear enmity against any one or to suffer pain for the worldly desires.” Qairwani treats kindness as the basis of a just society and the reign of stable peace. He writes: “Kindness is a very welcome virtue and a sure way to peace. Resort, then, to kindness and you will succeed.” Forgiveness according to him is the basis of restraint from tyranny. It enkindles kindness for one’s fellow beings and is repaid in kindness- He adds, “Make it your habit to forgive people and to restrain from tyranny and causing pain to others. You connive at the faults of others; you will emerge out as their chief. If you are kind you will be treated kindly, and if you spend you will recover.”

Abil Atahiya, another Arabic writer, evaluates piety, kindness and tolerance with an equally prominent and forceful degree of approval and explains in its importance as a paramount ethical norm. Kindness he says, is necessary to please God and invoke His mercy. It does not lie in external manifestation of help to others through money or other forms of gift but in the intense subjective experience of compassion and concern for the suffering humanity.

These Arabic littérateurs have not only showered highest praises on non-violent norms like kindness and piety, etc., but have also concerned the negative norms such as anger, jealousy and intolerance. Sharifur-Razi has expressed condemnation for anger and advised the devotees of Islam to desist from it. He says: “Stick to the will of God and be patient in misfortune and never use your hands along with your tongue (as in anger).” Similarly, Abil Atahiya writes that people should restrain from verbal arguments and exchange of abuses as it breeds a chain of evil and recoils upon the evil-doer causing him great harm. He says that an evil action breeds evil and a good deed multiplies virtues in social life, so good deeds should be

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Some of these writers have described the ideal virtues that man should cultivate in his personality. These bring out the importance accorded to the norm of non-violence in Arabic literature. Nahjul Balghate mentions that a virtuous man is one “who forgives the aggressor, bestows (kindness) upon one who deserves (kindness) and is friendly to him who is unfriendly.” Moreover a good man is he “who is patient in misfortune; thankful in plenty and who himself suffers pains to comfort people. The nobility of character also lies not in wanton use of power and infliction of tyranny upon men but in showing kindness and tolerance. The concept of justice has also been meticulously analyzed in Arabic literary works and is treated as the sine qua non of a stable society and the harmonious interpersonal relationship. Kindness and justice are thus two dominant norms, which persistently occur and have been extolled in the Arabic literary and philosophical traditions. Kindness is a norm of non-violence at the personal level of which justice is the expression at the social level. Thus, non-violence has been emphasized, in Arabic literature both at the personal and the social levels of behavior. Thus value-system of nonviolence is in harmony with those laid down in the Koran and the Hadith. These also resemble the norms of non-violence as found in the Hindu and the Chinese traditions. In the, Hindu tradition piety and kindness have been projected as norms of universal applicability; this has been slightly modified and circumscribed in the tradition of the Koran, but in Arabic literature this finds full expression without any hitch or inhibition. In contrast to the Hindu tradition, the meaning of non-violence contained in the Arabic literary tradition is oriented towards humanistic and life-affirming principles. This ethic is not posited on the foundation of asceticism and life-denial. However, the ascetic value-orientation of non-violence is also not wanting completely. Especially in the mystic and Sufi traditions of Arabic literature this form of emphasis on non-violence can be found.

This emphasis on simplicity in life and an attitude of denial of worldly pleasures, to safeguard moral virtues is found in the writings of Mutanabbi, Abil Atahiya and a few others. Mutanabbi describes the lust for riches and high aspirations...
as the sources of misery of man on earth.\textsuperscript{30} The plea for a simple life is also found in the writings of Abil Atahiya who writes: “Accept that which is basically needful for your livelihood, be generous to your brother and be kind to them and refrain from tyranny and untruth.” Thus, it is clear that a tradition of asceticism and simple way of life has also been present, in the system of values running through the Arabic literary tradition. The role of this value-system has no doubt been not as predominant in the Arabic tradition as in some other cultures of the East, specially Hindu and Buddhist. The value system of non-violence in Arabic literature can be qualified as rational humanistic and in this sense it is closer to the Western tradition. The humanistic ethic is more predominant as compared to the transcendental. This brings the value-system of non-violence closer to the practical issues of life and it gains a purely ethical character, as a set of moral virtues.

In Persian literature\textsuperscript{31} one finds another illustration of the continuity of the value system of non-violence in Islam. The intensity in the ethical concept of non-violence found more pronounced in this literary tradition which often projects on mystical form of universalism and the idea of identifications with all beings, there is a great impact of Sufism on the tradition of nonviolence in Persian literature, which is evident from the works of almost all the prominent literature like Saddi, Rumi, Shirazi, Omar Khayyam and others. Persian literature resembles the mystical devotional tradition of non-violence in India found in the literary and poetic works of saint-philosophers like Ramdas, Kabir and Nanak, etc.

A value-system of non-violence is found perennially running through the Persian literary tradition. Non-violence is accepted as a value symbolizing justice in social dealings, kindness in personal relationship, humility and simplicity in character and absence of tyranny in the power-system of society. Tyranny and violence are condemned with great force, and people are exhorted to avoid causing tyranny (sitam) even though it may mean risk to their status. Saadi writes “If thy hands have borne no tyranny against any one, it should cause no worry to thee even if the whole world turns critical.”\textsuperscript{32} Nixami Gajnavi speaks about the disintegration that is caused in society as a result of resorting to tyranny, be it by rulers or kings or the ordinary

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p.330.
\textsuperscript{31} Gulistan and Bostan by Saadi.p.233.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
man. It is said that tyranny is the surest course for the decline of empires and degradation of character if applied in private life. Rumi also warns that, "do not like silk worm, spin around yourself (the fiber of tyranny), for thereby, as you yourself would realize, you are digging (for yourself) a (deep)well." In the same context, Rumi also says that one should treat the weak not as incapable of retaliation or without power; they would derive their support from God to retaliate against tyranny. Thus, it is quite evident that violence and tyranny have been condemned as major disvalues which ought to be suppressed. The poets specially address their appeal to the kings that they should desist from and safeguard their subjects from tyranny.

The value system of non-violence finds expression in Persian literature not only indirectly, through condemnation of tyranny, but also directly, through emphasis on cultivation of positive love, universal harmony, kindness or compassion and humility. The references to the feeling of love that are found in Persian literature, specially in the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam and Khair, can be interpreted both in the spiritual and worldly contexts of meaning. In both the contexts, however, they express the deep underlying values of humanism and creative sensitivity of the Persian literary tradition. In the writings of Omar Khayyam, however, there is also a touch of the epicurean value orientation, close to that of Charvaka in the Hindu tradition. However, there are also instances of direct reference to universal love. Shirazi writes: "I traveled across the whole universe and eventually have chosen that out of love (universal love) which is inexpressible."34 We find a clear strain of mysticism in the form of universal love as mentioned above by Hafiz Shirazi.

Kindness and compassion are the two moral virtues which have been treated as occupying a place of importance in the ethical system represented by Persian literature. The ideal of compassion has been portrayed by Saadi as analogous to the feelings of a saint whose heart melted like wax in compassion, thinking that the thief had returned disappointed from his house.35 Nasiruddin Tusi has classified the various virtues that men should cultivate. Generosity is mentioned by him to be a composite of many moral virtues which one should follow in social behaviour. He says that generosity consists of kindness, sacrifice, forgiveness and affection. If all these virtues

33 Nizami Ganjavi, Mekhanzan-e-Asrar, Lahore, N.D.
are present in a man he would be called generous. Generosity breeds compassion. Tusi defines compassion as “to be deeply moved by someone’s pitiable condition and the attending resolve to remove the same.” Accordingly as men follow the path of virtue and desist from vices they develop the character of a just man, who treats all beings with love and compassion. The ideal of a just man thus represents the value-system of non-violence in the personal character of man.

Humility, tolerance and forgiveness are some of the other moral virtues which have been eulogized in the Persian literary tradition. Saadi says that a virtuous man is modest and humble by nature, just as a tree bends down when laden with fruits similarly a man of knowledge and virtue, he says, works humbly in society. Forbearance and lack of pride are other qualities of the virtuous men.

Thus, it is evident that in the Persian literary tradition the dominant normative elements of non-violence are the same as in Arabic literature although these have a relatively greater ethical involvement. The meaning and conceptual structure of non-violence, however, remain the same, that is, non-violence is treated as a moral virtue leading to a happy personal life and a stable and harmonious society. The concept has a more dominant activistic and positive ethical connotation. Nonviolence means kindness, compassion for others suffering, acts of social charity and justice, etc. It is not linked with the non-killing of animals or vegetarianism as in the Hindu tradition. It is also not judged on a purely rationalistic or utilitarian criteria it retain an ethical character. The concept and value-system of non-violence is thus primarily humanistic. Though it sometimes strays into the field of mystical universalism as a result of the Sufi influence, yet it never loses its predominantly humanistic character.

Islam is based on revelation of the Koran. It is a religion of personal faith which gives full autonomy to the follower, at the same time enveloping him completely within its fold. It is for this reason that Schuon compares the Islamic religion with a “Block” and Christianity with a “Centre”. The Christian is marginal to the centre as he belongs to the faith through sacrament only whereas the Muslim is within the ‘Block’ enfolded by it, he is his own priest and bears direct responsibility to

36 Nasuruddin Tusi, Akhlaqe- Nasiri, p.66.
37 Ibid., pp.66-67.
This reflects the social solidarity of the Muslim community. This solidarity is expressed in the historical fact that in Islam, state and church are one and the same; the political power goes together with the religious sanctions. It introduces between the social structure and the value-system of the Islamic society a remarkable degree of concomitancy and synchronism. Nevertheless, the personal nature of the Islamic faith is the primary factor of which the social solidarity is a derivative. Smith writes: It is well known that Muslim society has remarkable solidarity, that the loyalty and cohesion of its members are intense. Many have recognized that the community is not only a social group but a religious body; that Church and state are one, to use the inappropriate language of the West. Yet to stress these facts, to insist upon the centrality of society is not to deny but to interpret our initial emphasis on religion as personal. The community is based on, as it is integral to, individual faith. Not only is Muslim society held together (as are other societies) by common loyalties and traditions, and by a very carefully worked out system of values and of beliefs. Not only is it the product of a superb ideal. It pulsates with the vitality of profoundly held and deeply personal conviction, a religious conviction that is warm and meaningful for the individual member. One can say that this society, this community is the expression of a religious ideal, using religious in the personal sense. As a creed or theological system may be expression in an intellectual form of a personal faith- as is often the case particularly with Christians-so a social order and its activities are the expression in a practical form of a Muslim's personal faith. Just as to be a Communist involves being the member of the Party, so the religious conviction of a Muslim implies participation in the group. Membership in community i.e., not something distinct from or added to, is not even simply consequent upon, but is an aspect of personal Islamic.  

This reveals the central focus of Islam upon a social philosophy. The dominant institutions and their values in the Islamic society should conform to the ideals of the Islamic faith. Society is a medium for the fulfillment of the destiny of man as revealed by the Islamic doctrine. In the realm of social ethics this doctrine is manifest in five types of values which the Koran has-laid down for every faithful Muslim. These are (1) the profession of faith, (2) prayer, (3) alms, (4) fasting, and (5) pilgrimage. The

faith refers to the absolute monotheism which is advocated by Islam. The alms are a kind of tax levied upon every Muslim, and according to which every Muslim must set apart a certain portion of his income for acts of charity and humanitarian activities or programmes in conformity with the Koran. Fasting is to be done during the month of Ramadan, to glorify God for his goodness.” The pilgrimage to Kaaba at least once in his life is prescribed for every faithful Muslim. Pilgrimage marks a period of asceticism and self-penance in the life of a Muslim. He has to abstain from worldly pleasures, observe complete non-violence except for the killing of dangerous insects or animals and refrain from consumption of meat or intoxicants, etc.

The social organization in Islam revolves around these five; major regulations. All social processes and institutions must promote them and in this way the Islamic society is an enactment of the Islamic faith. The most important of these institutions is the state. The head of the state in the Islam is called Khalifa which means successor to Prophet Mohammed as well as to the Imam or the spiritual head. The Khalifa is chosen by plebiscite and represents both political and religious authority. He must be obeyed in all circumstances except when his policies go against the precepts of the Koran and the Hadith. The democratic principle has thus been present in the early Islamic polity, though in practice the case might have been different. The Khalifa has to work, according the Islam, in consultation with a council called Majlis-i-shura (state council). The codes prescribed for the deliberations of this council are religico-political and must follow the injunctions of Islam. The Koran is the final arbiter in case of differences of opinion within the council. The Koran emphasizes the virtue of consultation in the processes of political decision-making. It says: “Those who hearken to their Lord Rab conduct their affairs by mutual consultation and counsel.”

This indicates that religious injunctions constitute the ultimate in matters of social and political policies in Islam. All social, political and economic aspects of life are to be governed by the rules laid down in the Koran called Sharaa. Every Muslim Society must take Sharaa to be the final guide for all types of social behaviour and social policy.

Besides the Koran, the other sources of the Islamic law and regulations are the Hadith, or the traditions of the Holy Prophet; the Ijma or the legislative councils and

41 The Koran, Sura, 42:38.
the Siyas based on the use of analogical reasonings for the adaptations of Islamic laws of the Koran to communities having a different culture and history. Of all these Koran and the Hadith are the most important sources of the Islamic social institutions and ethical norms. The political ethics of Islam has been subject to serious controversy in regard to its bearing upon the tradition of non-violence. The difficulty arises because of the legitimation granted to holy war in the Koran. But this legitimation has not been an unqualified one. The Koran says: “If any one amongst the pagans asks thee for asylum grant it to him so that they may hear the word of God; and then escort them to where they can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge.” 42 It further says: “It may be that God will grant love and friendship between you and those you now hold as enemies. For God has power over all things; and God is Forgiving Most Merciful.” 43

The basic policy of state in Islam is to establish a society based on justice and faith and the propagation of this faith to the outside world. There is truth in the statement that up to certain limit violence has been justified in Islam specially for the protection of the faith and its propagation. But for these two exceptions the Islamic polity embodies many norms of nonviolence such as, social justice, equalitarianism, democracy, social tolerance and co-existence. However, the political unity of Islam always reflects a unity of the faithful. The essence of these values is contained in what is called Tauhid in Islam. As Iqbal says “The essence of Tauhid as a working idea is equality, solidarity and freedom. The state from the Islamic standpoint is an endeavour to transform these ideal principles into space-time forces, an aspiration to realise them in a definite human organization. It is in this sense alone that the state in Islam is a theocracy, not in the sense that it is headed by a representative of God on earth who can always screen his despotic will behind his supposed infallibility”. 44

Islam prescribes a patriarchal form of family in which the women are generally subjected to the care of the men though they enjoy some legal rights (for separation, etc., in case of cruel treatment). The prophet forbade cruel treatment to women and children. The Koran lays down: “Do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans,

42 Ibid., Sura Al Tawabat, 9:6.
43 Ibid., Sura Al Mumtahina, 60:7.
those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are stranger.” 45 Besides these obligations there are many ethical commendments in the Koran laying down the norms of good behaviour, chastity, filial and conjugal responsibility and punishment to wrong doer. The forms of punishment described in the Koran as well as in the Hadith, are often retributive and seem to be influenced by the Hebrew system. Except this, in all other areas of social, dealings mercy, tolerance and harmony have been prescribed. The Hadith treats hoarding of goods to be sinful, and if the creditor extends the time limit for the payment of debt, it is considered to be an act of virtue. 46 Suicide according to the Hadith is also a sinful behaviour and has been prohibited. 47 For matrimonial relations the consent of the woman has to be taken. This indicates that although the position of women in Islam has been of a dependent they were allowed freedom about the most important matters affecting their life.

The political structure of Islam as mentioned in Hadith is only an extension of the Koran; norms show that norms of non-violence have been extended in the Koran and the Hadith also to the domains of political relations and diplomacy. The Socio-political ethics found in Arabic literature also reveals that there was a sound tradition of non-violence. Usottai lays down norms of strong conformity to the ethical codes by children and youth. He mentions patience and forbearance as the two important qualities for being elected to the office of tribal chieftainship or leadership. Usottai also lay great emphasis on the values of equality and reciprocity in social dealings. He writes: “Recognize the rights (and privileges) of your neighbours and every noble man does recognize the rights of others.” 48 In another work of Arabic literature, Muallaqat Aasha it has been said that virtue lies in piety and recognition of others’ rights and privileges.

The emphasis on duty and performance of responsibility is found in the works of Razi who writes “And if you wish you can attain best rewards in the hereafter, if you entertain the guest, show kindness to your relatives, discharge your obligations and surely thereby you will attain the hereafter”. 49 Wisdom, courage and temperance have been mentioned in the Najahul Balghate to be the fountains of virtues and good

45 Roran, Sura-Am- Nisa, 4:36.
49 Rozi, Nahaujal Balaghata, p.232.
character. Abil Atahiy has laid emphasis on good neighborliness as the most important ethical duty of a man. In some Arabic texts specially Ghazzal's *Ihya ul Uloom* and Qairawan's *Kitabul Umder* the interdiction of the Hadith on hoarding for profit and selfish gain has been repeated. Ghazzali writes: "He who, because of the fear of poverty, devotes all his time to amassing of wealth is really a pauper."

“Qairwani also speaks about, the futility of wealth and misery associated with the miserliness.”

In the Persian literary tradition one finds another rich contribution to the social ethics of non-violence. Persian literature refers profusely to the characteristics of good rulers, expressing its resentments against the tyranny caused by kings and chiefs and stressing the role of justice in social relation and social policies. The ideal king is described by Saadi as the one who avoids tyranny, keeps the welfare of his subjects uppermost in his mind and follows and implements the norms of equality and justice. He writes: “Who is in the whole world more fortunate than the one who, while ruling over the people lived with equality and justice. When the parting bell (call of death) is struck for such a one, the people offer their sympathetic prayers over his grave.”

Saadi also says that the advocates the killing of such kings who become tyrannical and says: “Never tolerate the tyrant rulers; he is to be flayed out of his fatness, for the head of the wolf is to be snipped off all at once or it tears off the goat the people.”

Nizami Ganjvi mentions the shunning away from the violence as one of the chief qualities in a king. He says: “Thou art (in reality) a servant though professes to be a king; and thou can never be a king if thou taken thyself to destruction (violence).”

The fortune of an empire grows, on the basis of justice. He says that the fortune of the Turks, which rose high, attained sovereignty because of Justice.”

Justice is the most important pre-requisite for a benevolent rule. Nizami Ganjavi pleads for equitable rights to people according to their merits. Ghazzali, on the other hand, advocates the ethics of ascetic simplicity and universal love to establish the kingdom of God on earth. He writes: “It should be understood that the world is a temporary abode in the way unto the exalted Lord (God) and all the people in this

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53 Ibid., p.13.
55 Ibid., p.69.
abode (world) are like fellow travelers as belonging to the same troupe. Now, as the destinations of all the travelers is the same, it is but incumbent upon them to have amongst themselves affection, unity and co-operation and to have due regard for the rights and privileges of others."’56 He further says that “be aware that to rule over a domain is a great task and it is the kingdom of God on earth if it is carried in accordance with justice and it becomes the kingdom of Sultan if it is carried without justice and compassion. Nothing is more disastrous than the tyranny of the ruler, and the foundations of an empire lie deep in knowledge and good practice."57 There can hardly be a better example of non-violent polity than the one just described by Ghazzali.58 Rumi in another context favours a kind -treatment for the victims of war and forgiveness in the hour of victory. He says that real forgiveness lies in showing compassion when one has the power to retaliate. This comes closet to the Gandhian definition of non-violence which implies- willful restraint in the use of force even when once has the power to do so.

Besides the ideals laid down for political order and kingships the other most important social norm that occurs in the writings of Persian thinkers and poets is that of justice. It is expressed in a most equivocal and emphatic form in the writings of Nizami Ganjvi. Justice is an important social ethics which governs the various ramifications of social relationship in the Islamic society. Ganjvi treats justice as an indispensable source of political stability and prosperity of the people in society. He also treats it as the highest form of religious ethics.59

The nature of social ethics in Islam thus clearly reveals the deep and profound introjections of the value-system of nonviolence in the foundation of various social institutions through which it tends to manifest itself in society. In one word “justice” symbolizes an equivalent of the concept of non-violence in the Islamic social ethics. Besides, the norms of compassion, equality, universal love and charity have also been emphasized. All forms of social dealings should be imbued, according to the ethical system of Islam, with these norms. Only on this basis could a real Islamic society be achieved. The social structure and culture of such a society would thus. In here most of the norms of non-violence. The social, ethical and political values in Islam have

56 Ghazzali, Keemia-ay- Saadat, p.176.
57 Ibid., p.243.

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been interpreted by some people to connote that Islam legitimizes war and violence and hence has no integral ethics of peace and nonviolence. It is, therefore, necessary to analyze this aspect of the problem in the tradition of Islam. An extreme viewpoint in this regard is held by Robert Payne who writes that: “Such brutal encouragement to war is repeated ad nauseam in the Koran and there is not the least doubt that he (Mohammed) meant exactly what he said. By precept and example he sanctified the sword. No other religious leader of comparable stature has ever urged such unpitying war against his enemies. The saying attributed to Mohammed, know that paradise lies under the shadow of the sword is one which Muhammadans have always taken to heart.” This also conforms with common stereotypes about the methods used for the spread of Islam. There is no doubt that in the course of the propagation of Islam the help of sword and naked force had been resorted to but the point as to whether the use of such force has been really justified as being the only legitimate course, needs a reassessment and reconsideration.

The Koran gives permission to wage war in the cause of Allah (God). It says: “Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you; but do not transgress the limits, for Allah loveth not transgressors.” It evidently means a defensive war and not an offensive one, Tayyebulla writes: “War sanctioned in Al-Koran is always in the cause of Allah. Always defensive, never aggressive. War for the propagation of religion of Islam, aggressive war, is strictly forbidden. La ikraha fid-deen (there is no coercion in religion). The myth of propagation of Islam with the Koran in one hand and the sword in the others as invented by hostile European propagandist-writers is at once exploded.” However, there are many-references in the Koran, where “not to turn back from unbelievers arranged in hostile array” has been advocated. But at the same time the Koran also says: “But the enemy inclines towards peace do thou also incline towards peace and trust Allah.” It is thus evident that although in the Koran great emphasis has been laid on the ethics of love, mercy, co-existence of religions etc., and war is allowed in case of the challenge to the Islamic faith. It has been advocated as a defensive policy, and war to safeguard religion has been considered legitimate. In the

61 The Koran, Sura Al- Bagara 2:190.
62 Tayyebulla, M., Islam and Non-Violence, op.cit.., pp.43-44.
63 The Koran: 2:8:61.
Hadith dying for one’s religion is considered to be the noblest form of death.\textsuperscript{64} However, wanton indulgence in war is proscribed in the Hadith.\textsuperscript{65} In Arabic and Persian literatures one finds that the consciousness about the futility of war begins to grow further. Usottai writes: “War is nothing but that which you have already tested and it is not a whimsical statement about war. When you incite it, you will find it bad and it will emit sparks as you kindle it. Then the war will grind you as the grinding-machine its leftover corn, and it will break repeatedly and all its evils descend permanently. It will then bear for you lowest type of children like Ahmare Aad and it (war) will suckle them and wean them.”\textsuperscript{66} Quirwani has spoken of the greater strength of peace which will ultimately overcome the forces of war and would recompense for it. He writes “Peace breaks the shoulder of mischief and violence. His bestowing of goods, therefore, makes a recompense for war”.\textsuperscript{67} In Persian literature one finds different values regarding war ranging from the utilitarian to mystical modes of evaluation. Saadi in one of his couplets advocates the need for ruthless suppression of the enemy but in another talk of universal love and futility of strife.

Thus, it appears that in Islam, whereas the traditions of peace and non-violence have been strong, the waging of war and exercise of physical force for the defense of religion has been prescribed and considered to be legitimate. In regard to the personal and social ethics, Islam has embodied many humanistic norms of behaviour. Of course, these ethical norms and values regarding peace are drawn from the classical period of Islamic history.

The Islamic tradition in spite of its monolithic and integrated character has not been free from internal schism and change. From a dynamic historical point of view it has been successively changing its character since the classical period, which coincided with its establishment and many consequents. It changed considerably during the medieval period which was a period of new cultural innovations. In the modern or contemporary period it is now faced with many new challenges. The medieval period of Islam emerged with the innovation of Sufism\textsuperscript{68} a mystic form of interpretation of Islam. It had deep roots in all the non-Arab Islamic traditions. Rumi who was a great advocate of tradition of non-violence has been one of the greatest sufis.

\textsuperscript{64} Hadith 1524, p.327, Op.cit.,
\textsuperscript{65} Hadith p.83.
\textsuperscript{67} Quirwani, Op.cit.,p.70.
and philosophers. Besides *Sufism* other changes that took place in the structure of Islam may be mentioned. First there was slackening of the faith in the identity of the religious and secular roles specially in regard to politics and power. The *Khalifah* of the classical times, who represented both the secular and religious authority, was replaced during this period by the office of a *Sultan*, the secular ruler. Second, religion came to be treated as a co-ordinate of social and secular aspects of life. Third, the ethnocentric humanism of Islam was converted into a kind of universalistic humanism through the *Sufi* movement. In this connection Smith writes: “*Sufism* differs from the classical *Sunni Weltanschung* radically; and not least is its attitude to history temporal mundane. It stresses the individual rather than the society, the eternal rather than the historical, God's love rather than His power, and the state of man's heart rather than behaviour. It is more concerned that one's soul be pure than that one’s action be correct. Some *Sufis* thought the law unimportant. Most regarded it as private discipline guiding the person towards transcendent fulfillment and paid little heed to its function in ordering society in marshalling history into a prescribed pattern.”

By the 16th century the Muslim culture had thus, again reorganized itself and became powerful. However, in the 18th century, Islam faced a period of decline again, as a result of the disintegration of the political and military power. *Sufism* itself degenerated into a superstitious cult. It was during this period of internal disintegration that Islam had to face the nascent power and vigour of Western tradition.

WHAT IS THE PLACE of violence in Islam? Is Islam a nonviolent religion, then? The answer, to be honest and to be truthful to life, is both yes and no. Islam does not advocate violence but does not shun it altogether. *Life* is full of contradictions and these contradictions do reflect themselves in what one can call a contextual theology, if it wishes to be true to life. The Koran does not advocate mere abstract theological and metaphysical doctrines. The Koranic theology does not neglect the concrete socio-political context. All scriptures, on close scrutiny, would be found to contain contextual contradictions. And the Koran is no exception to that. In fact, the scriptures provide both normative as well as contextual answers. Normatively speaking, the Koran opposes violence but permits it contextually.

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When it comes to the context, one must take socio-political and socio-economic conditions of the society in which a particular religion originates. Hinduism is a nonviolent religion in the ideal sense. However, in the midst of the Mahabharat war, the conditions were different and even Lord Krishna had to urge Arjuna to fight even if it meant shedding the blood of his near and dear ones, in fact, his own cousins. War has justification in certain circumstances, especially if inflicted by exploitative and oppressive forces. But war can have no justification for spread of religion. Even the concept of jihad in Islam has to be seen in this light. Jihad has nothing to do with the spread of religion, it is only a war against oppression and exploitation.

Thus Koran sanctions war if the weaker sections of the society are being persecuted and there is no way left out to rescue them. Thus the Koran says: “And what reason have you not to fight in the way of Allah, and of the weak among the men and the women and children, who say our Lord, take us out of this town, whose people are oppressors, and grant us from Thee a friend, and grant us from thee a helper.”\(^\text{70}\)

It can thus be clearly seen that the Koran urges upon believers to fight against oppression being perpetrated against men, women, and children, who are weak (mustad'ifin). Commenting on this verse, Maulana Muhammad Ali says: "This verse explains what is meant by fighting in the way of Allah. While most of the believers who had the means had escaped from Makkah, which is here spoken of as the city whose people are oppressors, there remained those who were weak and unable to undertake a journey. These were still persecuted and oppressed by the Makkans, as is clearly shown by the words of the verse, and not only men, but even women and young children, were persecuted. Fighting to deliver them from the persecution of the oppressors was really fighting in the way of Allah."\(^\text{71}\)

Thus to fight against persecution is to fight in the way of Allah. The next verse also makes it clear when it says: "Those who believe fight in the way of Allah and those who disbelieve fight in the way of the devil (taqhut). Taqhut, it must be remembered, represents the forces of oppression and exploitation. Also, it is necessary

\(^{70}\) The Koran 4:7:5.  
^{71}\) Ibid.
to wipe out those who in no other way can be persuaded to give up persecution. The
Koranic doctrine in this respect is that “persecution is worse than slaughter.”
Uninterrupted persecution, therefore, should in no way go unchallenged. If allowed to
persist, it may lead to much greater slaughter in future. The Koran does not want
exploitation and persecution to go on in society. It must be nibbed in the bud.

The jurists and the ulemas have divided, in view of such Koranic verses, the
idolaters into two categories harbi and ghayr-harbi, i.e., warmongering and non-war-
mongering idolaters. While the former should be treated as enemies and fought
against, One latter should be treated as allies and friends and Muslims should live in
peace with them.

The concept of jihad in Islam has been generally misunderstood. Muslims too
are responsible for this misunderstanding. They often justified wars of aggression by
Muslim rulers—often power seekers—as constituting jihad. Nothing could be farther
from Islamic teachings. The Koran permits war against oppression to defend the
oppressed and the exploited. Only such wars could constitute jihad. It should also be
remembered that Islam, besides being a religion, was also a revolutionary movement
of its time. It sought to change not only religious beliefs but also the social structure
aspiring to build up a just society favouring the oppressed and weaker sections. Allah
Himself declares in the Koran: “We desire to bestow favours upon those oppressed in
the land, and to make them the leaders, and to make them the inheritors.”

Four key concepts advocated by the Koran are adl, ihsan, rahmah, and hikmah
that is, justice, benevolence, compassion, and wisdom. None of these concepts
would promote violence. The very spirit of these key concepts would be injured by
violence. Yet the vested interests would see to it—that none of these concepts is
established in the society. Islam, in fact, did not seek to fight peaceful idolaters, much
less seeking their forceful conversion. In fact, it sought to fight the idols of greed,
desire, and interests, to establish a society based on unity and equality of all human

72 Ibid., 2-1-91.
73 Ibid. 2-8-5.
beings.74

The contemporary changes in the Islamic tradition thus refer to the internal adjustment that the Muslim culture has been making in the wake of the Western cultural contact. The intellectual expression of this emerging synthesis of Islam with rationalism can be found in the writings of Iqbal. Iqbal lays emphasis on two things: first the assimilative quality of the Islamic doctrines and secondly, the liberal nature of injunctions of the Koran. Consequently, he approves of the rational reforms introduced in the Islamic society of Turkey. He criticizes the rigid and parochial character of the orthodox interpretation of Islam and says: “The only alternative open to us, then, is to tear off from Islam the hard crust which has immobilized an essentially dynamic outlook on life, and to rediscover the original verities of freedom, equality, and solidarity with a view to rebuild our morale-social and political ideals out of their original simplicity and universality.”75 Iqbal understands Islam as a spiritual community of men imbued with the sense of inner freedom emanating from faith in God. In this lies, according to him, the fundamental universalism of Islam which recognizes the unity of mankind as a result of its spiritual relationship with one God. Thus, it is evident that the culture of Islam is passing from its classical orthodox form to a form of a new synthesis as a result of the impact of Western cultural forces. In fact Islam has made adjustments within its normative structure whenever it has encountered socio-historical situations warranting it. In this process of change in Islam, the tradition of non-violence has also undergone changes. The earliest ethical tradition of nonviolence in Islam as revealed by the Koran and the Hadith has been ethnocentric and particularistic. It emphasized absolute non-violence within the community of the faithful. But for the outsiders it prescribed a policy of peaceful coexistence and allowed also violence if the situations demanded. In the 16th century a new tradition of non-violence emerged in the Islamic faith with the rise of Sufism. The concept of non-violence and ethics of love took a mystical and universalistic form. The Sufi movement was mystical, universalistic and ascetic in orientation, in this sense it also came closest to the Hindu tradition of nonviolence and made a great headway in India during the medieval period of its history. The third phase in the


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tradition of Non-violence in Islam coincides with the impact of the Western culture on its ethical and normative structure. In this process the tradition of non-violence assumed a rational-humanistic character which is now emerging in all the major traditions of the world as a result of the growing scientific and technological worldview and the value-system of secular humanism. This augurs well for the growth of a meeting-point of various religion-cultural traditions and for the birth of a universal society which the future may have in store for mankind.