A Research Review of Anwar Sheikh's Thoughts Regarding Jihād

Dr. Syed Toqeer Abbas
SST Govt. High School Lakhodair
LahoreCantt:toqeerlakhodair@gmail.com
Dr. Muhammad Riaz
Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies Lahore Garrison University, Lahore:mriaz@lgu.edu.pk

Abstract

Warfare is an unevitable part of every religion, society, and civilization. Man desires survival naturally which is not possible without self-defense. Islam also permits its followers to fight for survival. The Islamic concept of war is completely different from other concepts. According to Islamic teachings, Jihād is not fighting just for personal interests but it is about a struggle for the sake of Allah Almighty and Islam. However some of the opponents and critics try to disgrace Islam by speculating and conjecturing with insufficient knowledge or understanding. Anwar Sheikh is one of the apostates of the Subcontinent who spread repugnance against Islam through his mistaken ideas. He targeted the holy Qur'ān, ḥadīth, Sīrah of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), Islamic history, culture, and civilization. Jihād is also included in his allegations. He reverted from Islam and passed his several years in Europe where the environment changed his mind. Though, there is the concept of holy war in other religions but, in this case, Anwar criticized Islam mostly. A brief critical analysis of Anwar's allegations regarding Jihād is presented in this research article.

Keywords: Jihād, Anwar's objections, Holy war in Hinduism, Islamic doctrine

Introduction

Anwar Sheikh was born in the Indian Subcontinent to a Muslim household. His family used to refer to him as 'Ḥājī' because he was born on the day of "Ḥajj". His mother had memorized a significant part of the Qur'ān, and his parents were devoted Muslims. He first learnt Arabic from an Imām and Mullah who was his grandfather's younger brother. In addition to Bukhārī, Muslim, and Ibn Mājah, he also studied Tafsīr, literature on Arab culture, Islamic history, and other Islamic works.

In 1956, he was relocated to Wales, UK, in search of a better future, where he later wed a British woman. There, he began to study Islam critically, but because of his lack of theological understanding, he eventually began to despise it, which marked the start of his apostasy.[1] He studied the Rig Veda while conducting research in Wales, became impressed by it, and embraced Hinduism. He changed his name from Muhammad Anwar Sheikh to Anirudh Gyan Sheikh after conversion. In Pakistan, there was a tremendous deal of uproar when he published his book, 'Islam: The Arab National Movement,' in 1995. The religious scholars asked that he be put to death for his apostasy and criticism of Islam.[2] His important work is as under:

Islam: The Arab National Movement
Islam: The Arab Imperialism
The Vedic Civilization
Islam: Sex & Violence
Islam and Human Rights
This is Jehad
Islam and Terrorism

[1] Douglas Murray, Victims of Intimidation: Freedom of Speech Within Europe's Muslim Communities, The Center for Social Cohesion, 2008, 65-66
[2] Ibid, 65

What is Jihād?

One of the fundamental principles of Islam is jihād, which means "effort," but is applied in a much broader sense. Jihād is the effort made in Allah's way to spread nobility and eradicate evil from human society, whether it involves spending money or giving one's life for the cause of Allah. This diligence could take the form of an armed assault or a good inner effort.[3] According to this understanding, Jihād does not just refer to murder, as some non-Muslim detractors claim. The fact that lies behind the scenes is that murder is Jihād's last and ultimate act. It is a coordinated effort carried out by clear-cut guidelines. Any armed trial conducted by a person is not a Jihād. Because the Islamic state reserves the power to proclaim Jihād, no one has the authority to do so.

The antagonists of Islam, either the people of the Book or the polytheists, have always put groundless charges on Islam and tried to disclose a fake picture of it so that other people would circumspect Islam as a fragmented, dubious, and predominantly in the prospect of the current situation, a terrorist religion. They repudiate this verity that there is more impetuosity and outrage in other religions than Islam.[4]

Opponents of Islam have placed much emphasis on Jihād. They think Jihād as a great threat to humanity. However, this is not the case at all. Anwar Sheikh, like other opponents, has tried unsuccessfully to discredit Islam by highlighting Jihād too much. He has raised a number of

[3] Al Zubaidī, Muhammad Murtaḍā al Ḥussainī, Tāj al ’Urūs min Jawāhir al Qāmūs, (kwait, 1994), 2nd edi, vol.7, 534,537 ; Angel M Rabasa, The Muslim World After 9/11, RAND Corporation, 2004, xxxviii

[4] Raymond Ibrahim, Are Judaism and Christianity as Violent as Islam (Middle East Quarterly, Summer 2009), 4

objections in this case which cannot be explained in detail here, but a few of them are mentioned so that the readers may know his viewpoint.

Jihād for Forced Conversion

Anwar claims that Islamic Jihād is nothing but the way of forced conversion. He writes:

> *"This is further proven by the fact that now Allah changes His attitude altogether and declares the revolutionary principle of JEHAD for forced conversion of the non-Muslims."*[5]

What a fantastic charge against Islam made by Anwar that Jihad was intended to be converted forcibly, whereas the reality is very different. Islam is currently ranked second in the world, behind Christianity. All modern technology and modern weapons are under the control of non-Muslim governments. Pakistan is the only Islamic state among the world's eight nuclear powers. Muslims used to outnumber Christians in number, but that has completely reversed today. Islamic Jihād would be number one with the most nuclear weapons if it supported forced conversion. Christians have historically used forced conversion but Muslim governments have never done so. R.V.C Bodley writes that when Umar took the government in hand he strictly ordered to save not only the lives of the Christians but their churches as well. Everything of Christianity used to be respected by the Muslims when the Islamic flag was waved all over Spain and it was continuous till the 15th century at the time Arabian rule collapsed. It could not be continued after achieving domination by the Christians. The

[5] Anwar, Islam: The Arab Imperialism, (Cardiff, UK, Principality Publishers, 1998), 41

Muslims had to face forced conversion from the Church.[6] In addition, the activities of the East India Company, Shudhi, and Sanghtan movements are a witness who took the path of forced conversion. As a result of these Hindu movements, more than 7,000 people were converted to Hinduism.[7] If Muslims did so, perhaps the number of Muslims in India today would be higher.

Jihād for Cultural Slavery

Further, continuing his objections on Jihād Anwar writes:

> *"The Prophet forged an unusually murderous and effective tool called 'Jehad' for turning the conquered nations, into mental and cultural slaves of Arabia."*[8]

This demurral is also based on Anwar's personal judgment which has no chronological certainty. In the Qur'ān or Ḥadīth, wherever Muslims are commanded to wage Jihād, there is a very clear mention the Jihād should be waged for the pleasure of God and to vindicate Islam only. As for the fact that the conquered territories were to be mentally enslaved by the Arabs, Anwar is not fully aware of the history of the world in this regard. History shows that whichever nation prevails, the defeated community accepts culture and social customs; thus the defeated nation automatically becomes a mental slave of the dominant nation. Today the world is ruled by the West and that is why Europe's culture, dress, and life style are accepted in the world and people are becoming slaves of Europe

[6] Ronald Victor Courtenay Bodley, The Messenger, The Life of Muḥammad (Lahore, Orientalia, 1954),137

[7] Nandini Gooptu, The Politics of the Urban Poor in Early Twentieth-century India (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001), p157 ; Shriranga Godbole, Sanskrutik Vartapatra, Pune, Sanskrutik Vartapatra, 2010, 61-66

[8] Anwar, The Vedic Civilisation, (Cardiff, UK, Principality Publishers, 2003), 188

offhand. The British rule on the Subcontinent lasted for many years and today 76 years have passed since the end of this rule but still, Pakistan and India have not been able to remove the British influence mentally. So, Anwar's statement is just a baseless objection gratuitously.

Jihād: A Mean of Looting

Further, Anwar states that Islamic Jihād is nothing but killing and looting. There is no welfare of human society in it. According to him, Jihād is all about annihilation, disfigurement, and unhappiness; it is not about any ethical, communal, or humanitarian service as the Muslim divine pretend.[9] If he studied the war history of the world nations and compared it with Islamic martial rules, he would never have objected. History has shown wherever and whenever war started in the world there has been killing, brigandage, and depredator and the dominant forces have always looted the occupied lands. Anton Holzer states the circumstances of World War 1:

> *"The soldiers invaded villages and rounded up unarmed men, women and children. They were either shot dead, bayoneted to death or hanged. The victims were locked into barns and burned alive. Women were sent up to the front lines and mass-raped. The inhabitants of whole villages were taken as hostages and humiliated and tortured.[10]"*

Anwar's statement is nothing but circulating abhorrence against Islam. He did not mention Europe, where all sorts of barbaric acts were being committed against Muslims like different manifestations of

[9] Anwar, The Vedic Civilisation, (Cardiff, UK, Principality Publishers, 2003), 205
[10] Anton Holzer, A History of the First World War in 100 Moments: Austro-Hungarian Army (The Independent, 7 April, 2014)

Islamophobia, incidents of arson of the Holy Qur‘ān, an insult to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) under official patronage, scarf ban in educational institutions, etc. All these events are happening in such countries which are called magnanimous states.

In 2011, in a Russian court, a local man filed a lawsuit against ‘Bhagwat Gita’, alleging that the book promotes warfare and incites aversion in society, and is part of extremist literature.[11] The picture of Islam Anwar has drawn is not true. The following is a brief account of the Islamic guidelines and conditions for war, which will make a clear difference between the Islamic concept of war and other approaches.

1. According to Islamic teachings, it is necessary to give an ultimatum or declare war before the fight. If the enemy violates a treaty, that should be revoked and that is the declaration of war.[12]

2. War is prohibited without the permission of the head of the Islamic State. This authority is vested in the highest authority of the state, whether it be an individual or a parliament.

3. In Islam, war is only in case of defensive needs. Muslims were never initially ordered to invasion, rather war was allowed when they were forced to do so.[13]

4. Do fight to maintain peace and security so that stability is established in society. Only those who try to destroy peace should be fought.[14]

5. Islam also commands compassion for war prisoners. There are three orders for them, one is to be released free of charge, the second is to

[11] BBC Urdu, 19 December 2011
[12] Al-Qur‘ān, Al-Anfāl 8:58
[13] Al-Qur‘ān, Al-Anfāl 8:61-62
[14] Ibid, Al-Baqarah 2:190

be released in exchange for a Muslim prisoner and the third is to be released in exchange for ransom.[15]

6. Above all, Islam gives the following instructions during war:

a. The agricultural area will not be unnecessarily damaged.

b. Those who are not involved in the war will not be killed.

c. Women, children, the decrepit, and the disabled will not be killed.

d. Panic will not be blown out in the dominant areas.

These are the guidelines that distinguish the Islamic war concept from other religions. An in-depth study of early Islamic wars would be very convenient to have more understanding of this concept.

Bloodshed: A Religious Duty

Next objection is that Jihād is the religious responsibility of every Muslim and he has to kill non-Muslims in any case whether he is guilty or not. Anwar writes:

> *"Continuing the discussion of jehad, I must add that it is a duty of a Muslim to fight a non-Muslim whether he has done him any wrong or not."*[16]

This allegation is nothing but a joke. There are currently over 200 million Muslims in India, but the case is inverse the situation. Hindu extremists are killing Muslims and the Muslims are worried about saving their lives. If, according to Anwar, Jihād was the responsibility of every Muslim and they practically adopted it, then the geographical situation of India today would be different. More than half of India would have become Muslim and there would have been an Islamic government. But this is not the case. Those who have studied Islam are well aware that Jihād is not

[15] Al Quran, Muḥammad 47:4

[16] Anwar Shaikh, The Vedic Civilisation, Cardiff, UK, Principality Publishers, 2003, 201

obligatory for every Muslim like prayer and fasting, but in war situations, it is necessary to fight only for defense. Furthermore, every religion has made battle mandatory to protect its beliefs, even if it means fighting for them, and the same concept is found in Hinduism. Kaushik Rao writes that contribution to the righteous war, or Dharma Yuddha, (धर्म युद्ध), was said to be honorable. It was a major liability of the Kshatriya and victory in such wars was regarded as a matter of honor.[17] It is clear from Rao's statement that Hinduism also wants its survival and war is inevitable for this purpose. Inside the Rig Veda, there is a mention of a prayer to the deity in which wealth is sought only in order to defeat the enemy and conquer areas. It is written in the Rig Veda that:

> *"GIVE us wealth, Indra, that with might, as heaven o'ertops the earth, o'ercomes our foes in battle Wealth that brings thousands and that wins the corn−lands, wealth, Son of Strength! that vanquishes the foeman."*[18]

The following five points are mentioned in this prayer:

1. Confer us wealth

2. This wealth should not only be in the form of money but also give outward strength and power

3. Defeat our enemies on the battlefield.

4. The wealth and power with which the territories can be conquered

5. Indira is the son of power that destroys enemies.

---

[17] Kaushik Roy, Hinduism and the Ethics of Warfare in South Asia From Antiquity to the Present (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2012), 29-30

[18] Rig Veda, Book.6, Hymn.20, Mantra.1

Apart from this, there are many other verses of Rig Veda which mention war, fighting, victory, overcoming the enemy etc. Therefore, as much as Islam allows the fight for religious survival, Hinduism teaches more than that.

Allegation on Muslim Rulers

Anwar also criticized some Muslim rulers. He writes, "No wonder, his disciples like Muhammad bin Qasim, Mahmud Ghaznawi, Muhammad Ghaori, Ahmad Shah Abdali etc., robbed the last penny from India under the pretext of destroying the Indian idols."[19]

As far as the incursion of Muḥammad b. Qāsim is concerned, there is a detailed mention of this strike in the famous writing 'Chach Nama' which contains the history of Sindh. According to this writing, the main reason for Muḥammad b. Qāsim's attack was the Muslim prisoners who had been taken hostage by the pirates and Rāja Dāhar was unable to free them. The imprisonment of these Muslims and the stubbornness of Rāja Dāhar led to this raid.[20] In addition, Lane Poole (a well-known English scholar and author), describes the circumstances of Muḥammad b. Qāsim's attack that numerous folks came out beating drums and dancing to say welcome. The Hindu rulers had troubled them heavily, and the Jats, Meds, and other tribes were on the side of the assailants. The work of subjugation was thus assisted by the dissension of the residents, and jealousy of race and creed conspired to aid the Muslims. To such appellants, Mohammad b. Qasim gave the liberal positions that the Arabs usually presented to all but inveterate foes. He imposed the customary poll

[19] Anwar, The Vedic Civilisation, 197

[20] Mirza Kalichbeg Fredunbeg, The Chachnamah, An Ancient History of Sind (Karachi, Commissioneris Press, 1900), 49-55

tax and spared the people's lands and lives. He even left their monuments un-desecrated: 'The sanctuaries,' he announced, shall not be inviolated like the churches of the Christians, the synagogues of the Jews, and the altars of the Magians.[21]

According to Lane Poole, the people of India were fed up with their own kings so they sided with the foreign invaders to get rid of the tyrant rulers. By this reckoning Muḥammad b. Qāsim did the Hindus a favor by freeing them from such rulers. Except for Muḥammad b. Qāsim and all the other Muslim kings made much more scientific progress in India than the Hindu kings. India was an example to the world in all spheres of human life civilization, culture, agriculture, medicine, arts, economy, religious freedom, harmony, etc. Europeans used to call it the Golden Sparrow because of this development. As for as the looting of wealth is concerned, Anwar did not do justice in this regard. The fact is that all the wealth was spent on India, but when the British and the Portuguese set foot here, their eyes were on the wealth. Thus, with great ease and secrecy, they went back to their homeland carrying wealth in both hands.

Crusades: Anwar's Misunderstanding

Referring to the Islamic wars with Europe (Crusades), Anwar has sharply criticized and presented Islam as a religion of destruction. He writes:

"Just consult the pages of history to find out how
the Muslim warriors waged a Holy War against

[21] Stanley Lane Poole, Medieval India under Muhammedan Rule: 712-1764 (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), 9-10

Europe for no fewer than four hundred years to cut down half of its population."[22]

Anwar's model of these wars is wrong over head and ears. He has flogged a dead horse to denigrate Islam by hiding a number of facts. First, according to historical sources, these wars have been fought for two hundred years (1096 to 1296)[23] and the second lie is that Muslim militants killed half of Europe's population. In fact, he is looking away from the real background of the Crusades. One of the motives for these wars was the Seljūq Turks inflicted such a defeat on the Byzantine emperor that put Byzantine Empire's durability in danger. The emperor, therefore, called in the Pope for the release of his lands, and the Pope egged on the Christian world against Islam with the slogan of holy wars. And the second most important and special basis was the Pope's own spiritual power in Europe was coming to an end due to which the sovereigns and kings were getting out of his grip. Therefore, in order to save this spiritual sovereignty, the Pope brought whole Europe against Islam.[24]

Michael O'Neill states that one of the main motives for the Crusades was to increase the power of the Roman Catholic Church. In other words, the Crusades were just an excuse for the establishment of a political grip on European kings and emperors. By the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century, the papacy had weakened considerably. So, Pope Urban II resorted the Crusades to get back the power of the

[22] Anwar, Islam and Human Rights, Cardiff, 17
[23] Ernest Barker, Crusades, Encyclopedia Britannica, (New York, University of Cambridge, 1911), 11th edi, vol.7, 526 ; Urdu Dāirah Ma'ārif e Islamiah, Dānish Gāh e Punjab, Lahore, 2005, edi.2, vol.12, 209
[24] Ibid, 210

papacy.[25] Michael's statement is illustrated by Pope Urban's speech to Christians. He held the opinion that for a Christian, the entire globe serves as an exile. A better patrimony is promised to you in the Holy Land if you leave a rich legacy here. The living will see the Lord's tomb, but the dead will ascend to the heavenly mansions. Happy are those who are led to such a fight so that they may participate in such rewards. Bless those who, taking this commitment upon them, shall inherit such a reward.[26]

Pope Urban's speech made the Christian world so religiously obsessed that the Jews and others were converted to Christianity forcibly. Samha Golden writes that at the end of the eleventh century, Christians set forth from Europe on a Crusade to free the Sacred Land, brutally endeavoring to convert to Christianity the Jews they met on their way. It became clear that the Christians were prepared to involve in violent behavior, whose aim was to force conversion to Christianity.[27] So, these are the facts behind Crusades that Anwar ignored and the fact that the Muslim soldiers killed a large population of Europe is also based on outright lies. History has shown that no other nation has done as good as the Muslim forces in their conquered territories.[28]

Conclusion

Defense is the natural right of every human being whether it is individual or collective, national or religious. Apart from Islam, when we look at the chronology of other religions regarding Jihād, we see barbarity, brutality and animalism instead of humanity, morality and good manners.

[25] Michael J O'Neal, The Crusades (New York, Thomson Gale, 2005), 59
[26] George W Cox, The Crusades (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), 31
[27] Simha Goldin, Forced conversion during the First Crusade, (Manchester University Press, 2014), 23
[28] Bodley, The Messenger, 136-137

In the context of the current situation, the examples of Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and Occupied Kashmir are on the top. It should be remembered that the purpose of Islamic law is not to establish a state only on a piece of land, but to establish justice and fairness, protect personal freedom, eradicate moral and social corruption and bring humanity to the level of perfection. Every religion and nation wants its own internal protection as well as the remedy of external cruelty and brutality, which is only possible with power, and the use of power in Islam does not mean personal interest, but the establishment of a divine system. Islamic history is the biggest witness in this regard. On three continents, the Arab Bedouins established an effective government. They only did this within a few decades, according to the record. Islam established a theoretical framework for the innately ignorant civilization about fourteen hundred years ago. It also brought values that were ideal, proper, and suited for the time's civilized and cultured states, such as Rome, Persia, Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, and this is thought to be the pinnacle of Islam. These were the Arabs who would later rule and manage the world across all spheres of human activity.[29]

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

[29] Gibb, Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen, Muhammadenism; An Historical Survey, Oxford University Press, New York, 1962, p.9