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## **Islamic Perspective on War & Peace**

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In this article, I will discuss the need for global peace and harmony and suggest that Mahatma Gandhi's principles can guide humanity in achieving this goal. It highlights the challenges faced by the world, such as conflict, economic disparities, environmental degradation, and the lack of resolution to various issues. It emphasizes the importance of Gandhi's principles, including *Swaraj* (self-governance), democracy, nonviolence, Satyagraha (fighting for justice), tolerance, and *Swadesi* (self-reliance). These principles can help address societal issues and promote peace, equality, and harmony. The paragraph also delves into the Islamic perspective on war and peace, discussing the concept of Jihad, its misunderstood nature, and the rules and guidance provided in the Quran and Hadith regarding the compatibility between the Gandhian model peace of peace and the teachings of Islam, advocating for peaceful coexistence and interfaith harmony.

When we look at the present level of global Amity, Peace and Harmony, our conscience takes us back to seek a time-tested module of guidance that can transform the course of action, conduct and behaviour of mankind from extremism, fanaticism and obscurantism towards sobriety, moderation, integration and a bit of assimilation.

Today's planet Earth is divided into continents, then countries and nations and then blocks and conflict zones. However, in every available forum, peace is the darling of everybody but with every passing day, instead of making headway on peace, the world is getting into more frictions and factions.

The global human capital is full of avenues of knowledge, skills and application. Still, in, the present state of affairs, the only guide and the only saviour of humanity appears none but Mahatma Gandhi, his life, and his given six principles. Let us have a look at these as future guidelines for the global players to take the lead and get into a joint venture to rescue humanity from the perils of the time.

Demographic challenges, environmental degradation, global warming, economic imbalances, social and societal disparities, the increasing gulf between Haves and Have-nots, diverse inequities and inequalities, prolonged delay in conflict resolution, nuclear disaster, increasing conflict zones, race for superpower strategic, geographical and territorial depth and finally the threat to human life on this planet together prompts the conscience of the world to go in for many retreats.

United Nations, a premier world body of which almost all countries are members fails to offer resolutions on an equitable basis. The world financial institutions are failing to ensure a just finance and banking order. Human rights organizations are raising their voice. Still, on the ground, most of the targeted countries and societies resist their outbursts, and even their impact on the ground has many queries and questions. There are regional blocks and bodies to create an environment of cooperation and collaboration, even if they cannot break the ice. With all this, what is the way out? Where lays the remedy? Is there a guide, a philosopher or an ideologue available to lay the path of conciliation and reconciliation?

**Let us examine the relevance of Gandhi and his six principles in global peace, order and discipline.**

## *Swaraj*

Gandhi's political ideologies are deeply rooted in moral and ethical principles. He planted the seeds of Swaraj, which rests beyond the limits of political independence, in a system of Indian traditions and values, internal strength and the intent to fight (back?) against all odds.

Here the message of Mahatma from the land of Buddha and Rama to the global society is that to fight back any evil a strong moral and ethical base is necessary because that alone offers good space to penetrate the conflict zones and its allied constituencies. Most recently, our Prime Minister, Shri

Narendra Modi, has intervened in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, wherein he succeeds in establishing the neutrality of his credentials. All the stakeholders appreciate this role of our leadership because there is no trust deficit on either side as far as his competence, worth and intentions are concerned.

## **Democracy**

The Mahatma's notion of democracy emphasizes "mobilising the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in the society in the service of the common good of all."

His idea of democracy does not confine to the right to franchise, vote, or seek political power only. Much more than that, it offers an enlightening space to the world community through a focus on governance that derives its strength not only from the aggregate expression of the will of the people, but it reflects the face of the wisdom of the elite as well. He prefers achieving this by evolving an ideal amalgam of multiple resources for ensuring the good of the people, society and human civilization. Following his footsteps, India remains the largest-running democracy where peaceful and timely power transfer has a glorious history. Most nations and communities have a lot to draw from the Gandhian idea of democracy. Spirituality is integral to his political faith and belief, and that adds to the marvel of India.

## **Non-violence**

Gandhi's advocacy of non-violence needs no introduction. Gandhi had always believed that only through ahimsa can one only through ahimsa can one attain enlightenment in life. That is, non-violence in our actions, in our words as well as our thoughts.

Mahatma is a living apostle of peace and non-violence. He is a trendsetter for the preachers and practitioners of the theory of aggression, violence and war. His journey of life is an embodiment of what he has been preaching throughout his life. Here is a man who, amid the worst of violence, keeps fast unto death to restore calm, peace and civil order. There is nothing which ever succeeds in provoking him to take to ulterior or ultimate extremes. He represents a middle path, which accords a sense of equity and equality to everyone. He is above all petty and narrow concerns and considerations. Violence generates more violence here again; the world has to turn towards Gandhi.

## **Satyagraha**

In keeping with his concept of democracy, Gandhi believed in achieving the same opportunities and benefits for the weakest that the strongest in the society enjoys. He feels that nations and communities can achieve this societal priority through strict adherence to the principle of non-violence. Mahatma himself propounds that in his actions, responses and general conduct for others to follow.

The world has a categorical division between Haves and Have-Nots'. He believes in Ram Rajya, here the last man in the last corner remains the State's priority. He thinks of the weakest first and sees a definite share of the poor in the wealth of the wealthy. Mahatma, at the core of his heart and soul, is a humanist par excellence!

Living to the ideal of Gandhi, the architect of the Indian constitution the preamble of it guarantees equality of opportunity and status to all the citizens of India. Not only this, but it goes a step further by offering political, social and economic justice to all. What can be a better module of governance than what Mahatma's legacy offers to the inhabitants of this earth?

## Tolerance

Gandhi always spoke in favour of one universal religion, but at the same time, he also promoted the coexistence of different religions. He believed there was no need to declare one better than the other, and said that all religions are equal and correct. Mahatma lays an ideal base to the followers of all religions. Instead of indulging in the debate of supremacy of Religion A or B, the best available course to humanity is to accord respect and reverence to all Faiths and Beliefs. Interfaith harmony through the extension of common spiritual bonds is the best answer Gandhi offers to the Global community to remain peaceful within their own confines and respectfully co-exist with the rest.

## *Swadesi*

It promotes home-grown and homemade articles and stepping away from all things foreign-made. The idea was to protect and promote indigenous industries and the economy. The pandemic is proof that we need it, now more than ever. India, within its dynamic pandemic management, proves to the world that Vasudhev Kutumbhkam is not only our Faith, but we also and conduct accordingly.

Swadeshi is too noble an idea that inspires all nations and communities to work for the fulfilment of self-actualisation, self-respect and self-esteem needs. Self-sufficiency and self-reliance should be motto of all societies, and to achieve that goal, attributes of partnership and co-ownership must be the running guideline. Mahatma encourages the locals to rely on self-faculties of mind, body, soul and spirit and the available domestic resources to earn their living. Entrepreneurship remains his priority for every Indian.

All societies have a lot to learn from all these six teachings of Mahatma to tackle issues that human society and civilisation are contesting and

confronting within their respective domains. Mahatma and his way of life is a living phenomenon that has relevance for all the systems and societies the world war.

## **War in Islam – Dimensions and Rules of Business**

Through this part of my article, I am going to put before the reader where Islam, its Scripture Quran and the traditions attached to the Prophet of Islam (Peace be upon Him) stand on war, peace, treatment of captives, formations of Jihad and on the sanctity of peace treaties. Generally, most people consider Jihad and war as synonyms and imply waging war against nonbelievers or infidels. Let us start with Jihad.

### ***Jihad* – a misunderstood concept**

The term jihad, often translated as “holy war”, actually means struggle or exertion. The Prophet Muhammad referred to the battle as a “minor jihad” in comparison to the struggle against the evil of one’s soul–self-exertion in personal compliance with the dictates of Islam -, which he describes as the “superior jihad”:

“If they withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (guarantees of) peace, then God hath opened no way for you (to war against them)” (Qur’an 4:90); “But if they (the enemy) incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in God: for He is the One that heareth and knoweth (all things)” (Qur’an 8:61).

Holy Qur’an is not a man’s creation. It is a word of the Creator, Almighty Allah, and the sole Sustainer of this universe. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam, Mohammad (Peace be upon him), through Angel Gabriel. It addresses both Muslims and humankind. Its verses relate to situations that an individual, group, organisation, community, society or humanity may face, confront or deal with in life and leading life.

Peace is the core subject of the Qur'an however, besides many other subjects like war, conflict and discord and the fight for justice and the just human order also fall within its domain. For example, the verses for the state of war would differ from the state of peace.

Defining or understanding any verse in isolation from the context may invite misunderstanding or lead to misconception. Unfortunately, Jihad is the most misconstrued concept, and unfortunately, its recent misuse by misguided militancy further complicates its definition and understanding. Let me put the fact as it stands in the holy book.

Jihad has nothing to do with human killing. Innocent killing in Islam is a forbidden act, and to one innocent killing, it considers that killing, equal to the killing of humanity. It has the following domain, and with the given structured chronology, it implements on the ground.

Jihad fin Nafs (at the individual level)–It invites the conscience of human-self towards abandoning any form of allurements, greed, temptation, lust or committing an act of such built and orientation. It begins with self-control and self-containment. Piety, purity and perfection of human character are its fundamental attributes. It transforms into acts of humility, selfless service and perseverance of the higher order. At heart remains the objective of realising wholesome peace within and outside. Logically so, it starts calling for a fight with your self, soul and spirit. Consequently, the material being turns into a spiritual being. Discrimination in all its forms and manifestations loses its human insight and appeal. There are no enemies or favourites left, everybody looks alike, and thereafter, every human soul, in a natural course, falls within the eternal ambit of blessings. Now in everybody, you see and experience the manifestation of the will of the Creator. The best examples to offer to anyone to understand this Jihad are the lives of Aulias (saints) like Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti Ajmeri, Hazrat Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki, Mehrauli, Hazrat Khwaja Nizamuddin, Mehboob e Ilahi and thousands like them spread all over the world. Jihad fin Nafs (victory on self-greed and temptations) is Jihad-e-Akbar- the greatest.



Ijtemaie Jihad (at the societal level)–Anything that approves, prompts, pushes or promotes enmity, hatred, discord, societal disruption, or a threat to the sovereignty of the Creator and His will falls within the domain of community Jihad. Anything and everything that challenges the peace and order in the life of an individual, group, community or society, fighting against that with peaceful means is the extended explanation of Jihad. It allows the just expression of the collective will, and fighting for justice, human dignity, and fundamental human rights are its confines.

This is non-violent, peaceful and orderly in expression, content, display and demonstration. In this case, the fight for the cause of conflict and the contest for it has to confine itself within the ambit of the constitutional framework and the established norms of civility. Nothing against the Constitution, state institutions or for inviting societal disruption shall have the sanction, implied or expressed. Peaceful protest within an orderly structured mechanism is the final expression of Ijtemaie Jihad.

When all peaceful means of resolution are exhausted, and institutions providing justice fail to deliver, fair play goes out of the question, anomy of the highest order prevails, the rule of law disappears, optimism gets dead, might is right becomes the order of the day and the constitutional machinery collapses. The situation gets the worst of the worst, a state of civil war or a war-like situation emerges, and all hopes of a peaceful resolution are gone; then joining forces that can help rebuild the system and may bring back the lost order into a normal routine would also be Jihad.

Jihad is saif – (Jihad with a weapon) Islam permits the use of force in defence. The offence is never its first choice. When the war is thrust upon the Muslims and the Muslim States and fighting with weapons becomes a necessity, then killing those fighting you has a sanction, and to this, Islam calls *Qital* (permitted human killing). Kill the enemy, then until you finally crash, crush and finish it. In such a fight, children, women, standing crops, old and handicapped, institutions of goods and service shall remain out of the domain of the warriors and soldiers. In the Indian context and the

context of Indian Muslims, such a situation neither exists nor is there a chance of it. Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is not Jihad; towards this, there are worldwide edicts from the renowned Muslim clergy, which includes the Indian clergy as well. Any misuse or abuse of the concept of *Jihad* by terrorists has to have its straight rejection and condemnation with no ifs and buts' from Muslims worldwide.

## Rules for guidance on the battlefield

- Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path.
- You must not mutilate dead bodies; do not kill a woman, a child, or an aged man
- Do not cut down fruitful trees; do not destroy inhabited areas
- Do not slaughter any of the enemies' sheep, cow or camel except for food
- Do not burn date palms nor inundate them
- Do not embezzle (e.g. any misappropriation of booty or spoils of war), nor be guilty of cowardliness...

“When you meet your enemies in the fight, behave yourself as befits good Muslims.... If Allah gives you victory, do not abuse your advantages and beware not to stain your swords with the blood of one who yields, neither have you touched the children, the women, nor the infirm, also men, whom you may find among your enemies.”

## What do the Qur'an and Hadith say on various aspects of war and peace?

Once the hostility of the enemy ceases, the Muslims must stop fighting (Qur'an 2:193; 8:39):

And if they incline to peace, do so and put your trust in God. Even if they intend to deceive you, remember that God is sufficient for you. (Qur'an 8:61-2)

Faithfulness to a treaty is a most serious obligation, which the Qur'an and Hadith incessantly emphasise:

Believers, fulfil your bonds. (Qur'an 5:1)

Keep the agreements of God when you have made them, and do not break your oaths after you have made them with God as your bond ... (Qur'an 16:91)

Covenants should not be broken because one community feels stronger than another. (Qur'an 16:92)

Breaking treaties puts the culprit into a state lower than animals (Quran 8:55).

O Prophet! Tell the captives you have, "If God knows goodness in your heart, He will give you better rewards than have been taken from you and forgive you. He is forgiving, merciful ".And if they intend to be treacherous to you, they have been treacherous to God in the past and He has put them into your hands. (Qur'an 8:70-1)

When you have fully overcome the enemy in the battle, then tighten their bonds, but thereafter set them free either by an act of grace or against ransom. (Qur'an 47:4)

"God does not forbid you to show kindness to unbelievers who do not fight you because of your faith or drive you from your homes," the Koran says

(60:8-9). “Do not promote disorder in the earth after peace has been established” (Qur’an 7:56).

The following Hadith encourages fighters to refuse to commit war crimes on the battlefield: “It is obligatory for one to listen to and obey a Muslim ruler’s orders, unless these orders involve disobedience to God; but if an act of disobedience to God is commanded, it is not listened to or obeyed.”

In one example, the Prophet’s companion, Abdullah bin Umar, refused to comply with an alleged order from his commander Khalid bin Walid, one of Islam’s greatest generals, to kill all prisoners since bin Umar saw it as unjust. The Prophet later vindicated his decision.

To conclude, this article underscores the pressing global need for peace and harmony, suggesting that Mahatma Gandhi’s principles offer valuable guidance for humanity in achieving this objective. The world confronts various challenges, including conflict, economic disparities, environmental degradation, and unresolved issues. By embracing Gandhi’s principles of Swaraj, democracy, non-violence, Satyagraha, tolerance, and Swadesi, societies can effectively address these challenges and foster peace, equality, and harmony. The article also delves into the Islamic perspective on war and peace, clarifying the misconceptions surrounding the concept of Jihad and highlighting the rules and guidance provided in the Quran and Hadith. It emphasizes the significance of peaceful coexistence, treaty respect, and humane treatment of captives. Ultimately, the article underscores the compatibility between the Gandhian model of peace and Islam’s teachings, advocating for interfaith harmony and peaceful interaction among communities. Integrating these principles into our collective consciousness can pave the way for a more peaceful and just world.

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## Inter Faith Harmony Foundation of India

(a forum for inter-faith and inter-civilisation dialogue floated on behalf of Indian Muslims – established in 2005)