

## Maulana Wahiduddin Khan and his Critical Evaluation of Muslim Political Thought

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### **Abstract**

*Politics and governance has been the prime concern to the human thought since the inception of human being itself. Muslims too have developed their own methodology within the corpus of primary sources (Qur'an and Sunnah) since prophetic period. This has led to the development of Muslim political thought which has also been eventually discussed by the Islamists in the modern times. Due to different socio-political contexts of Muslims, Muslim political thought remains a matter of debate among the modern scholarship of Islam. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021), a profound Islamic thinker and writer of India make a critical evaluation of Muslim political thought within the modern socio-political contexts of Muslims. He has described each and every aspect of Islam within the domain of individualistic approach unlike Islamists' system-centric approach. Therefore, the paper is a humble and preliminary effort to explore the critical evaluation presented by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan on the relationship of Islam and politics which according to him has been overemphasized by the Islamists in the modern times. Moreover, the paper accentuates the interpretative approach of Khan vis-à-vis modern socio-political and religious contexts of Muslims.*

**Keywords:** *Islam, Politics, Wahiduddin Khan, Sharī'ah, Jihād*

### **Introduction**

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021) was a well-known Indian Muslim intellectual, scholar, peace activist, and author of more than two hundred works on Islam and Muslims. He has been acclaimed as the universal peace activist and won *Demiurgus Peace International Award* in 2002 and was given the title '*Islam's Spiritual Ambassador to the World*' (Esposito and Kalin, 2009: 96). He authored many works, the most prominent among them is the Qur'anic translation and commentary *Tazkīr al-Qur'an* (translated into English as *The Qur'an*) in which he emphasizes 'realization of God and realization of self' is the objective of religion (*dīn*). In 1970, he established *Islamic Centre* at New Delhi where he started to publish monthly Urdu journal *Al-Risāla* (The Message) from 1976. The English version of monthly *Al-Risāla* is also published under the title *The Spirit of Islam* (Hasan, 2015: 349). He established *International Centre for Peace and Spirituality* (generally known as CPS International) in 2001 at New Delhi as a part of his *Al-Risāla* Movement for the propagation of the message of Islam in accordance with the demands of the contemporary times. It is a non-political organization, the aim of which is to develop peace and spirituality which is to some extent lacking in the modern era. The main motive of it is to revolutionize the thoughts and to make humans actual human beings. He argues that peace and spirituality are the two aspects of a single fact in which the development of positive thinking among individuals is spirituality and to develop positive thinking at collective level is peace (Hasan, 2015: 253).

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Several works have been written on Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, which discuss various aspects pertaining to his life and thought; the most relevant among them are as under:

Irfan A. Omar, "Islamic Thought in Contemporary India: The Impact of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's Al-Risala Movement" in *Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought* (ed) Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi' (Malden, U.S.A: Blackwell Publishing, 2006). In this article the author focuses on the objectives of the *Al-Risala Movement* of Wahiduddin Khan and highlighted the role of its founder in the accomplishment of dialogue with other faiths, explicated his non-violent ideas and his interpretation of secularism in Islam. The *Al-Risala Movement* today represents a growing number of Muslims, many of whom come from the intellectual and managerial classes. The movement has many followers who work independently and are not dues-paying members; the organization has no structure except the implicit recognition of Khan's spiritual leadership.

Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Zubayr, *Maulana Wahiduddin Khan: Afkār wa Nazriyāt* [Urdu] (Lahore: Maktabah Rahmatan lil'Ālamīn, 2013) is an important work. In this work, the author critically evaluates the belief system and other thoughts of Wahiduddin Khan regarding some core issues of Islam like arrival of Mahdi, existence of *dajjāl*, signs of the Day of Judgment, implementation of *sharī'ah*, *jihād*, and finality of Prophet Muhammad.

Prof. Muhsin Usmani Nadwi, *Wahiduddin Khan: 'ulamā' aur Danishwarunki Nazar Mein* [Urdu] 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Delhi: Qazi Publications and Distributors, 2014). The book contains fifteen chapters in which the different scholars of Islam have contributed their chapters on the thought and movement of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. The prime focus of the work is to criticize the thought of Wahiduddin Khan which he presents on the different aspects of Islam and Muslims. They all, are of the opinion that this scholar (Khan) of Islam have interpreted the legacy of Islam with the different approach rather misinterpreted the Makkan and Madinan phases of the life of Prophet Muhammad.

Shah Imran Hasan, *Awrāqi-i-Hayāt* [Urdu] (New Delhi: Rahbar Book Service, 2015). This is a comprehensive biographical work on Khan. This work describes in detail his life since his birth up to the present times like his ancestry, birth, childhood, married life, his mission and movement, his works, and other aspects of his life.

The above works have not critically evaluated the discourse and approach of Khan on Muslim political thought. Moreover, the lacunae in such works is that these have not focused on the interpretative approach of Khan where he critically evaluates the Muslim political thought emphasized by the Islamists like Maulana Sayyid Ab'ul A'la Maudūdī (1903-1979) and others in the modern era. Therefore, the research paper explores how Wahiduddin Khan criticizes the thought process of Islamists in a detailed manner.

In the contemporary times, the post-Islamism trend gets developed because of the embrace of modernity within Muslim societies and the development of such hermeneutics by the Muslim modernists and neo-liberal scholars of Islam which focuses on the reformation and change in the contemporary societies. The enormous pressure from new challenges,

combined with the recent acceleration of the secularization process in Muslim milieus, societies, and states, has become so strong that it has inspired progressive thinkers everywhere. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan of India makes a formal exposition rather put forward their approach and discourse on Islamist (also known as fundamentalist and revivalist) thought keeping in consideration the democratic nature of Islam, modernity and modern values of social setup. His scheme is based on hermeneutical change in Islamic thought in the light of modern socio-political contexts. His critical evaluation on Muslim political thought in the modern times especially on the writings of Maulana SayyidAb'ulA'laMaudūdī<sup>1</sup> (1903-1979) has gained prominence within the contemporary Muslim scholarship throughout world.

### **Wahiduddin Khan on *Dīn* (religion) and *Sharī'ah*(Islamic law)**

Khan is interpreting *dīn* (religion) as 'the remembrance of God and to live the worldly life for the attainment of God's favour and salvation in this life as well as in the Hereafter (*ākhirah*)'. God has revealed one religion to all prophets that is Islam. The arrival of different prophets from time to time is because man sometimes forgot the actual path of Islam. Prophet Muhammad revived the divine religion and protected it for the coming generations. Islam is believed to be the true and eternal religion and guides in each and every aspect of life (Khan, 2016a: 32).

Khan while interpreted the Qur'anic verse (5:48; Khan, 2016b: 297)<sup>2</sup> of the Qur'an, he says that *sharī'ah* (law) means the etiquettes of '*ibādah* (worship) and *minhāj* means methods. '*ibādah* further consists of two things; one is internal reality or spirit and the other is public rituals and formal ceremonies. The people focused on the rituals more instead of spirit, that is why, the rituals got changed from time to time because the mentality of considering this framework as the real substance of religion were reduced by sending prophets from time to time in order to revive the spirit of '*ibādah* and made God the centre of one's attention. *Minhāj* means methodology as the different prophets had been given the different methodologies which were relevant to their respective times. So, it kept on changing mostly from one prophet to the other and will keep on changing from one period to another. The basic principles of *dīn* were not changed but the reason for the change in rituals and

<sup>1</sup> Maulana SayyidAb'ulA'laMaudūdī was an influential Muslim theologian and thinker of Indian Subcontinent who authored more than one hundred books on Islam and Muslims in Urdu language which discuss the themes like Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, sociology, economics, morality, politics, education, women issues and others. Some of his main works are: *Islami Riyāsāt* [Eng. Trans. *Islamic Law and Constitution*], *Khilāfat wa Mulūkiyat* [Eng. Trans. *Islam's Political Order: The Model, Deviations and Muslim Response*], *Khutbāt* [Sermons], *Tafhīm al-Qur'an* (6 volumes translation and commentary on the Qur'an) [Eng. Trans. *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*].

<sup>2</sup> We have sent down the Book to you with the truth, fulfilling [the predictions] revealed in the previous scriptures and determining what is true therein and as a guardian over it. Judge, therefore, between them by what God has revealed, and do not follow their vain desires turning away from the truth that has come to you. To every one of you We have ordained a law and a way, and had God so willed, He would have made you all a single community, but He did not so will, in order that He might try you by what He has given you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works; to God you shall all return; then He will make clear to you about what you have been disputing. (Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *The Qur'an: English Translation* (Noida: Goodword Books, 2016), 297.

methodologies from one prophet to another was based on the strategy that is, Divine Wisdom of putting mankind on trial and not on the basis of the evolution of religion (Khan, 2016b: 297). Again, in the post-prophetic era, the internal reality and formal ceremonies of *'ibādah* cannot be changed as the change of formal ceremonies is not the subject matter of *ijtihād*(individual opinion regarding religious issues), it was the prerogative of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) only. But *minhāj* depends on *ijtihād*, it may be continued till doomsday. If anyone can say that the Islamic movement is comprised of three phases- *da'awah*(call), *hijrah*(migration) and *jihād*(armed struggle/war), it cannot be true. These phases developed because of circumstances and cannot to be taken as the principle or belief of life because they come under *minhāj* not under *dīn*(religion) (Khan, 2013a: 38). Regarding the irrelevance of *hijrah* (migration) in the modern times, he is of the opinion that in the twentieth century the world is in complete change as the monarchical rule and dictatorship came to an end which changed the methodology at the greater pace as well. Today, the believers are having no need to migrate from one country to other or to combat the ruler ship of the time because history has made them so. In order to make the message of Islam relevant in the modern times, the believers should utilize the two aspects positively- complete religious freedom and modern resources (Khan, 2013a: 39). He lays more emphasis on the *da'awah* (call) of *dīn* in the modern times. According to him, principally, there are two types of struggles in *dīn*: one is *shahādat-idīn* (preaching of religion) and the second is *tā'īd-idīn* (vindication of religion). The first is the movement which works for the spread of *dīn*and will work rightly; the second is the movement which directly or indirectly reinforces *dīn*, e.g. criticism of evil thoughts, defence against enemy, struggling for the survival of any element of *dīn*, which doesn't have need of strong thought and strong action because God supports religion through evil persons as well. He quotes the Ḥadīth of the Prophet from *ṢaḥīḥBukhārī, Kitābal-Jihād*, '*Allah may support the religion with an unchaste (evil) man*' (Khan, 2017: 281).

Regarding the nature and application of Allah's commandments, he says that they are same as per their nature, but they are different as per implications. He provides the example of the commandments of *ṣalah* (prayer) and *zakāh*(poor tax), as both are obligatory but there are certain conditions with respect to *zakāh*. Islam never compels anyone to become so rich to pay *zakāh*. But the scholars of Islam have misinterpreted the Islamic way of life as the system in which every action becomes as obligatory *aṣṣalāh*. Khan argues that some commandments in Islam are desired while as some are conditional and circumstantial. *'Ibādah* falls in the category of desired and politics in the category of circumstantial. So, *dīn*is not bound to establish the political institution in the society rather it may lay emphasis on the reformation of being (Khan, 2017: 295-296). He further says that gaining power through violent means or to establish state power through dictatorial means is equally prohibited in Islam. Islam, moreover, prevents Muslims from *khurūj* (rebellion) against any established state. The matters of conflict takes place between people and the state are to be settled through negotiation rather than counter-compulsion. This eventually led to the existence of peaceful environment wherein the ideals of Islam flourish and the *da'awah* work may reach to the

level of perfection. Moreover, the other possible benefit of such environment is that the both ideal man and ideal society will automatically prepare the ground for the formation of Islamic society within. Khan further wants to clarify that establishing Islamic state is not the objective of Islam; it has been misinterpreted by the scholars of Islam (especially the revivalists) since the earlier times of Islamic history. Therefore, he critically analyzes the thought process overemphasized by the Islamists in the modern times. He says that establishing Islamic state is the subsidiary need of the Muslims but the interpretative approach of few scholars of Islam have presented it in such a way as it became the obligatory action for Muslims to struggle for it. Islamic state is not the project to work for; rather it emerges from the society itself provided the society consists of sincere, patient, practicing, and trustworthy Muslims. Therefore, Khan deliberates that the state is a reward for righteous Muslims in this world (as stated in the Qur'anic verse 24:55) (Ali, 2002: 351)<sup>3</sup>, not the matter of initiating struggle for it (Khan, 2012: 51-52).

Khan reiterates that for the perpetual reformation and stability of society, Islam has given the basic commandment through Qur'anic verse “(Believers are those) who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil” (Al-Quran, 9:112). According to him, this commandment has been wrongly interpreted and overemphasized by some scholars like Maulana Maududi and Sayyid Qutb who are propounders of Islamic revolution in political aspects of life. But the actual Islamic revolution is to imbibe the values of responsibility into the mind and soul of the people (Khan, 2012: 85-86). Khan further says that after the pious caliphate, when the people especially ‘*ulamā*’ (scholars of Islam) faced the blatant perversion from the rulers, they did not lead an insurrection against them rather they remain neutral from the political developments rather Muslims should avail such opportunities which can deter the hurdles in the way of progress and development and could live happy and prosperous life (Khan, 2012: 107-108).

According to Khan, generally there are three ways of interpretive approach which are generally being utilized by the scholars of Islam to interpret *dīn*: i) to discuss a part in relation to entirety; ii) to emphasize a dominant aspect of a given context; and iii) to overemphasize a particular aspect in such a way that encompasses the totality (Khan, 2015: 10-11). Khan says that Maududi utilized the third approach in which he presented the whole *dīn* under political interpretation (especially in his *Four Basic Qur'anic Terms*), eventually led to the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the real message of Islam (Khan, 2015: 12).

Again Khan says that the two types of emphasis are utilized while interpreting any particular aspect of religion, one is to interpret or preach any particular aspect as the core of the *dīn*; second is to make any particular aspect the pivot of the *dīn* round which the whole *dīn* is

<sup>3</sup> Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion - the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace: They will worship Me (alone) and not associate aught with Me. If any do reject Faith after this, they are rebellious and wicked. (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation, Transliteration with Arabic Text*(New Delhi: Wiseman Publications, 2002), 351.

revolving. The former one ignores the other aspects of *dīn* while as the latter one constructs the base of Islamic ideology on certain aspect of life. The former one could be assimilated as the practical necessity of the time but when it becomes the very base of interpretation of the whole *dīn*, and then it gets transform into philosophy (Khan, 2015: 22-23). He states that Maulana Maududi's thought engaged in such inordinate exaggeration that he made politics the basis of an entire interpretation of the *dīn*. His inclusion of politics in *dīn* is having no objection because politics is such part of *dīn* which could be included in the political *sharī'ah* of Islam having less relevance in the modern times because the Muslims are not able to struggle for the same. In *sharī'ah* related matters there is lot of difference between the real and relative aspects of *dīn*; the politics in the modern times could be enlisted as relative aspect that is conditional; hence based on the current situation of Muslims. Khan argues that Maududi greatly exaggerated the importance of the political aspect of Islam and evolved a political interpretation of Islam (Khan, 2015: 22-24).

While commenting on the Qur'anic verse 42:13 (Khan, 2016b: 1442)<sup>4</sup>, Khan interprets the term *Aqīmud-Dīn* differently as compared to the Islamists. Referring to Maududi, Khan says that he interpreted this verse in such a way that it encompasses the whole *dīn* covering personal, social, national, and international affairs. Moreover, the term *aqīmud-dīn* in this verse is interpreted by Maududi as 'to enforce' the laws of the *dīn* in their entirety. Further, Maududi interpreted it as '*dīn* cannot be materialized without a systematic form of government', and 'to establish the *dīn*', as mentioned in this verse, is the primary function of the government and the people. This is why; Maududi interpreted such verse throughout his writings as *Ḥukūmat-illāhīyah*(divinely-based government) (Khan, 2015: 44). After refuting Maududi's interpretation of such verse of the Qur'an, Khan reads this verse differently, as it means 'the dedication with the essence of the *dīn*' and 'the centre of attention should be God only not to establish the political system'. He further says that *aqīmud-dīn* or *iqāmat-idīn* does not mean to establish the entire *sharī'ah* system, but, to observe the religious obligations as a person is necessarily deemed to observe in order to become a good Muslim (Khan, 2015: 44-45).

According to him, some Islamists have interpreted the Qur'anic verse "*It is He Who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all religion: and enough is Allah for a Witness*" (Al-Qur'an: 48:28; Ali, 2002: 365) in such a way that they derive the political interpretation of Islam from it. Khan comments that the word '*hudā*' in this verse means divine ideology and the word '*dīn*' means the way of life based on that very divine ideology. He adds that Allah sent His *dīn* through prophets but the people made alterations in it from time to time, so the original message of Islam gets diluted or disappeared. Then after, Allah decided to reveal the original message of Islam (in the form of

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<sup>4</sup> God has ordained for you the same religion which He enjoined on Noah, and which We have revealed to you, and which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, so that you should remain steadfast in religion and not become divided in it. What you call upon the polytheists to do is hard for them; God chooses for Himself whoever He pleases and guides towards Himself those who turn to Him. (Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *The Qur'an*, 1442).

Qur'an) through the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) and protected it from such alterations forever. Hence, '*izhār-idīn*' does not mean the political dominance of Islam rather it means that the message of *dīn* was revealed in order to reform the unwanted practices throughout the world which was observed in the name of religion. Therefore, such verse of the Qur'an clearly indicates that Islam is the eternal divine message (Khan, 2018a: 297; Khan, 2018b: 72-73).

### **His Approach on Islam-Politics Nexus**

Islam is said to be the composition of various aspects of life be it social, political, economic, cultural, spiritual, and ethical, but Wahiduddin Khan interprets the message of Islam as the sole addressee of the Islam is individual not the whole system. According to him, the fundamental mandate of Almighty Allah is 'to be righteous in the world by observing good deeds and to initiate the process of reformation of human beings according to the ideals of Islam'. Khan is of the view that the reformation of whole system is not the goal of *dīn* rather the realization of God and reformation of self is the goal of *dīn*. According to Khan, there are two aspects of religion- one is real and the other is relative. He puts the political narratives 'establishment of power' or 'establishment of Islamic rule' into the relative category because it is dependent on the capability of Muslims. The main difference between the real and relative is that real is relevant in all times, whereas, the relative is required and essential only when the circumstances may allow it. He provides an illustration of performing *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah) is an obligation for those only who could afford the assets of its journey and those who could not are exempted from it (Khan, 2012: 147). Same is the case with politics, that is, if a group of Muslims find themselves in a position to establish peacefully Islamic rule anywhere, they could do so but if they are not in a situation to establish such rule, they shall not assume it as the real aspect of Islam is being refuted. That is why; Khan states that striving for political power is not the goal of *dīn* towards which the Muslims shall strive for (Khan, 2012: 148). The prime concern of the believer is to fulfill the commandments of Islam individually because Islam addresses the individual in order to uplift him morally and spiritually and the reward and punishment in the hereafter will be decided on the basis of individuality. He further explains that if the people will be in a position that God bestows them with power, they shall maintain justice and equality with the responsibility of good governance (Khan, 2012: 149). From the above discussion, it can be ascertained that Khan endorses the political aspect of Islam but do not consider it as the goal or main objective of Islam and discusses it in relative category. Therefore, he considers the establishment of Islamic state in the circumstantial category unlike Islamists.

Khan explains that the injunctions laid down in the Qur'an should be prioritized in the light of modern contexts through *ijtihād*. He explains that during the prophetic period the commandments like *da'awah* (call towards Islam), *sabr* (patience), and *jihād* (as *qitāl*) was not revealed at a time but they were revealed as per the situation of Islam and Muslims there. The people of that period had received such commandments stage wise from the Qur'an. Thus, the people did not get confuse in the understanding and application of such commandments.

Later, the Muslims find such commandments of the Qur'an all together in single book. It is now under the discretion of Muslims to find out through *ijtihad* (individual opinion) which one is relevant in the modern times (Khan, 2012: 160-161). Now, it is the responsibility of the *mujtahid* (authoritative interpreter in Islam) to analyze objectively and to find out which of the commandment is to be applied to any given situation and which of the commandment is to be considered abrogated for the time being. Earlier the nature and application of commandment was determined by the revelation through prophets from time to time; while as after the closure of prophetic office the nature, relevance and applicability is determined by the process of *ijtihad* (Khan, 2012: 163). Therefore, Khan declares on the basis of his own *ijtihad* that the struggle for gaining political power or to struggle for the establishment of Islamic state in the modern times is irrelevant exercise on the part of Muslims. Instead of it, the Muslims according to Khan should primarily strive to initiate the process of reformation among the individuals of society and to utilize the modern means of resources for the well-being of both Islam and Muslims especially in the fields of education, critical thinking, morals, and science and technology.

Khan argues that Islam consists of two major aspects - religion (*dīn*) and law (*sharī'ah*). *Dīn* is always absolute and cannot be changed. The *sharī'ah* on the other hand kept on changing from one prophet to another depending on the different socio-religious contexts. Therefore, he is supporting the view that *sharī'ah* is to be presented as per the modern contexts as the context may vary from one period to another. The aspect of Islam falls into the category of *sharī'ah* and *minhāj* (methods) is mutable as far as the reapplications of those aspects into the new contexts are concerned; while as the basic principle and essence of *dīn* is immutable. Therefore, Islamic message pertains to *sharī'ah* shall be reapplied and updated according to the expediencies of the time. Hence, *ijtihad* is the process through which the updation and reapplication of *sharī'ah* in the modern times is highly relevant. He explains that *jihad* (as *qitāl*), hostility with the Western theories and developments, and the struggle for establishing Islamic state are not the aspects to which the Muslims shall focus rather the modern means of resources shall be utilized to the extent that Islam could be presented as the propounder peace and justice throughout the world. He again asserts that the process of *ijtihad* in the modern times could be exercised by the creative and constructive thinking of the scholars of Islam rather than emphasizing on reactionary approach. He clarifies that the change in *sharī'ah* does not mean to change the very nature and principle of *sharī'ah* but it means reapplication of *sharī'ah* and *minhāj* within the changed situations of Muslims (Khan, 2012: 185-187).

With respect to the established political institutions, Khan is the propounder of positive status-quoism<sup>5</sup>. He says that the political nature of any society shall not be changed through coercion. As the pluralistic nature of Madinan society comprised of Muslims, idolaters, and Jews was not changed by the Prophet Muhammad ; likely the Muslims in the modern times shall change the nomenclature of any society. In Muslim majority state, every kind of

<sup>5</sup> It means that the political system shall not be changed even if it goes against the will of people; in such situation the people shall focus on other possible means and opportunities rather than political affairs.

subjects shall be guaranteed with equal rights and freedom pertaining to religion and other aspects of life. He again states that it was due to the acceptance of the status-quo nature of Madinan society, the Prophet Muhammad succeeded in undertaking peaceful *da'awah* mission within and outside Arabia (Khan, 2012: 211-212). Generally, secularism is perceived to be the idea originated from West and is considered to be antithetical to Islam and its ideology. Secularism according to Khan is the positive idea in the modern times because it gives freedom to each and every religion to preach its mission peacefully and should be taken as the positive platform for the preaching of Islam. Modern age is the age of freedom unlike classical age (where the religion was propagated by state through coercion), so the secular outlook of modern societies provides a positive ground for the preaching of Islamic message. The Islamic government is the relative aspect of *dīn* and the bestowal of God to the people who are pious or emerges from the pious people itself. The people could not strive themselves for its establishment prior to the situation favourable to them. Further, the Islamic government cannot be established through violent means of struggle or coercion (Khan, 2013b: 87). Khan also holds that the government is not necessary for Muslims to strive for, or change the non-Muslim regimes into Muslim one. He argues that fight against *fitna* (religious persecution) does not mean to change non-Muslim governments with Muslim one but it means to end intellectual and ideological compulsion in order to create the atmosphere of freedom for the religious missionaries. He adds that if the Muslims even go against any Muslim government, the other kind of coercion may prevail in the society which may lead to chaos and confusion everywhere. This is the reason; Prophet Muhammad strictly prohibited creating a group of people rising against any government (Khan, 2012: 245-246).

According to Khan, Islam believes in peaceful methods in order to lead a change into the society and asserts that the gradual process is more fruitful than undertaking revolutionary one through offensive means. The whole system of nature runs on the principle of gradualism, Islam too is the religion of nature, so it too believes in gradualism not in revolutionary processes as laid down by the Islamists in order to gain the political power in the society (Khan, 2013b: 83). The struggle for the attainment of power is in no way in accordance with the principles of Islam because the fundamental addressee of the message of Islam is individual not the system as a whole. Therefore, the individual attains prominence in *dīn*, rather than system. He further explains that the state structure could be developed or established into the society only when the '*ulamā*' (religious scholars) of society will succeed in transforming/motivating the mindset of Muslims towards it or it becomes possible by the will of Almighty as stated in the Qur'anic verse [24:55] (Khan, 2012: 247). According to him, the real cause behind the corruption in modern Muslim societies is the ideology "to establish the Islamic government" propounded by the Islamists, whereas, the objective of Islam is not to establish the government but to establish the authenticity of Islamic ideology. He adds that the scholars of Islam failed to understand the difference between the two terms (*Iqāmat-i-Dīn*/establishment of religion and *Iqāmat-i-Hukūmat*/establishment of government) that is why; Islam is blamed to be the religion of violence by non-Muslims while as it is the

religion of mercy and peace (Khan, 2000: 23). Hence, it can be perceived from the discussion of Wahiduddin Khan on 'Islam-politics nexus' that politics is the part of religion but having secondary importance. Furthermore, he states that the political structure of Islam may be established when the circumstances allow it, but when the situation does not allow for its establishment then it may be deferred by exercising *ijtihād* and the status-quo shall be maintained without disrupting the social order. Therefore, the present situation of Muslims does not allow them to struggle for the establishment of Islamic state rather they should try to utilize each kind of modern resources to spread the peaceful message of Islam by means of *da'awah* throughout the world.

### **Khan's Viewpoint on *Jihād***

According to Khan, *jihād* (war) literally means any sort of struggle while as the Qur'an mentions the term '*jihād*' for both religious and *da'awah* struggle. He says that *jihād* is usually misinterpreted by some scholars of Islam as the struggle against the non-believers in order to overcome their affairs especially at the political front. Khan asserts that there are three types of *jihād* in Islam; one is, with the self (*jihād bin nafs*) that is striving to control the undesirable instincts within self (*nafs*) like arrogance, jealousy, greed, and anger (Khan, 2010: 53).

The second is *da'awahjihād* or the *jihād* through the Qur'an. It means to explain the teachings of the Qur'an to the people by means of *da'awah* process. In this way, the concept of *tawhīd* (Unity of God) is being presented instead of *shirk* (polytheism); emphasizing the life after death; reward and punishments as per the deeds observed in this worldly life.

The Qur'an sanctions such sort of *jihād* as:

*“So do not yield to those who deny the truth, but strive with the utmost strenuousness by means of this [Quran, to convey its message to them]” (Al-Quran, 25:52, Khan, 2016b: 1111).*

Therefore, *jihād* is a peaceful struggle carried out for the dissemination of God's message through peaceful methods. So, the violence and compulsion have no place while waging *jihād* (Khan, 2010: 55-56).

The third kind of *jihād* is *jihād* with antagonists/enemies of Islam and is generally stated in the Qur'an in terms of *qitāl* (armed struggle), that is, engaging in war at God's behest at the time of aggression on the part of enemies. This *jihād* is purely in self-defence in order to counter aggression. It is also a sort of struggle against evil that is why it is called *jihād* in Islam (Khan, 2010: 67).

The term used for war in Islam is *qitāl* not *jihād* (Khan, 2013b: 106). Khan says that the Qur'an permits the use of *qitāl* at two situations; first is, 'to eliminate *fitnah*' and the second is, 'to defend the state'. *Fitnah*, he doesn't mean corruption here but it means religious persecution. In the classical age, the religious persecution was present in Arabia as well as in the other parts of the world. Allah commanded the Prophet Muhammad and his companions to strive against it in order to end this religious persecution for all times. In the modern times,

such religious persecution does not prevail in practice; hence, there is no need to wage such sort of *jihād* (as *qitāl*) anymore. While as, *jihād*(as *qitāl*) for defense is still relevant and will be prevailed till the Day of Judgment (*qiyāmah*) but it should be undertaken under some necessary conditions like it shall be state sponsored (Khan, 2013b: 88). War with an aggressor is a chance occurrence taking place as warranted by particular situations, while *jihād* is a continuous action which is at the core of the believer's everyday life (Khan, 2018b: 13-14). According to him, the Qur'an commands to wage *jihād*(*qitāl*) but the special and requisite circumstances should justify it. When aggression has already been committed by opponents, believers are obliged to defend themselves. Initiating hostilities is not permitted for Muslims. Even defensive war has to be openly declared by an Islamic state (Khan, 2016b: 76). If the offensive war is being initiated by the enemies against Islam, the believers are not supposed to retaliate immediately against them rather in the beginning all efforts are to be made to avert war by means of reconciliation or treaty. Moreover, the response is to be made at the state level rather than individual level (Khan, 2018b: 62).

Khan says that there are several groups and movements in the contemporary Muslim world who strive rather wage war for the restoration of *khilāfah* or Islamic political system. As the politics is related with the conditional and secondary aspect of Muslim life, so to undertake the violent step or wage *jihād* (as *qitāl*) in order to achieve it is not allowed in Islam. If it is done so, there will be coincidence with the existing system, who in turn can undertake measures to curb such revolt or resistance. Hence, the lesser evil will automatically be transformed into greater evil. Moreover, the possible opportunities for *da'awah* work will also be vanished. Such steps may have the resemblance of *fasād fi'l arḍ* (corruption in the land) which is a crime not an Islamic action (Khan, 2013b: 142).

### Conclusion

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan was an insightful Islamic scholar of 21<sup>st</sup> century who left a profound impact through his writings and speeches on the thought process of the world Muslims in general and Indian subcontinent in particular. His critical evaluation on the thought of Islamists' approach emerges a new discourse among the Muslim scholarship of modern age. He interprets the message of Islam in an individualistic manner rather than system-centric interpretation of Islamists which eventually paves the way for the peaceful presentation of Islam in the modern catastrophic world. He categorizes the priorities in Islam into two, one is primary like *'ibādah* (worship of God), *mu'arifat-i ḥaq*(realization of God), and *mu'arifat-i nafs* (realization of self) while as the other is secondary like politics, *jihād*, and implementation of Islamic laws. Therefore, he concludes that the first is eternal directive of Islam while as second is situational or circumstantial. Politics, he discusses in the secondary and relative category which is based on the socio-political context of the societies. He argues that the establishment of the Islamic state is not the prerogative of Muslims rather it is a bestowal of God to the Muslims through the Divine Will. Further, he argues that the present empire is the *da'awah* empire instead of political empire, so that the message of Islam shall be disseminated through *da'awah* works only. The application of Islamic laws through

political enforcement is not the prerogative of the Muslim leaders rather the democratic setup is the only way to execute the laws in consensus with the will of the people. Regarding *jihād*, he says that it cannot be waged to dismantle or change the non-Islamic regimes in the contemporary times rather the Muslims should utilize such means through which they may be able to transform the evil societies into God-fearing ones. He emphasizes the importance of *ijtihād* in the modern times to the extent that the mission of prophets to reform the societies could be undertaken through *ijtihād* only. His approach on Muslim politics (if possible in the contemporary era) is based on democratic model rather than autocratic and despotic one. Therefore, he presents his Islamic thought keeping in consideration the modern issues and challenges of the modern times. He has presented his thought in parallel to Islamists' theory of social reformation which eventually leads to the formation and development of such Islamic thought which is poles apart from the Islamists. His approach may be described into a phrase as 'bottom-up approach' rather than Islamists' 'top-down approach'. Further, it can be ascertained that his thought process is much influential and relevant within the societies where Muslims are in minority. Therefore, the need of the hour is to produce the Islamic scholars and intellectuals like Maulana Wahiduddin Khan in the modern times.

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